

# Fascism: some common misconceptions

By Noel Ignatin

A specter is haunting the U.S. left: the specter of fascism. Where is the measure taken by the party in power that is not branded as fascist? Welfare cutbacks, legislation to abolish compulsory union membership, the passage of a bill curtailing the legal right of dissidents to organize, efforts to ferret out and suppress those responsible for the bombing of public buildings in the center of large cities, the establishment of a professional army, moves to coordinate autonomous local police departments — all these measures and others which represent the ordinary functioning of government in a society dominated by bourgeois social relations are described as "fascist," or at the very least as steps toward fascism, by many left-wing organizations.

## "Properly speaking, what has been installed in Chile is not a fascist state..." (MIR)

It is a curious fact that the willingness on the part of many leftists to throw around the "fascist" label is not shared by some of the groups in other countries where there is a lot more justification than here for use of the term. For example, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) in Chile has stated,

Properly speaking, what has been installed in Chile is not a fascist state, but rather a military or gorilla dictatorship with fascistic aspects. . . .

It is not a fascist regime in the exact sense of the word for a variety of reasons. Its base of support does not come from a permanently mobilized mass movement. It does not have . . . the support of a cru-

cial social bloc. . . . It does not have a fascist party through which the dominant bourgeois sector articulates and centralizes its leadership of the process. The political police do not serve as the most powerful branch of the repressive apparatus. The Chilean military dictatorship . . . is far from having the strength, vitality or potential of the fascist states of past decades."<sup>1</sup>

This clear statement, from one of the groups most widely and highly esteemed by the U.S. left, has had no deterrent effect in this country.

There can be no serious objection if all that is involved is the use of a word — "fascism" — which is not meant to be taken scientifically but is simply intended to call forth a strong reaction from those hearing it. The fear is that more is in-

involved. The indiscriminate use of a term which is meant to apply to a specific form of rule that arises in definite circumstances can and does obscure the reality of modern society and the forms of social motion which appear within it, including the emergence of a revolutionary social bloc.

Current left thinking on fascism is shaped by lines that were worked out in the Third International (Comintern) following the death of Lenin, and especially in the early and middle nineteen thirties. The influence of that period has been transmitted to the present generation by means of three books: *Fascism and Social Revolution* by R. Palme Dutt, first published in June 1934, reprinted in several editions

through the next two years, long out of print and now reprinted by Vanguard Press, the publishing house of the Communist Labor Party; *Lectures on Fascism* by Palmiro Togliatti, first delivered in Moscow in 1935 and now gathered and published by International, the Communist Party publishing house; and *The United Front*, consisting of the main report and closing remarks by Georgi Dimitrov to the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in August 1935 together with various speeches and articles written by him over the next two years, first published in 1938 and since reprinted by both the CP and the CLP.

Of the three, Dimitrov's has had by far the greatest impact. It has never really been out of print, was a major influence on the thinking of the Black Panther Party at the time of the United Front Against Fascism Conference in 1969, has been read by the largest number of people. It is also the least valuable of the three books. Like most reports to Party and Comintern congresses during that period, it is lacking in any explanation of the considerations that led to the adoption of the current line and is limited to setting forth the official policy in a way that ensures its diligent implementation by Party members who are likely to do better when not encumbered by the realization that the official policy was selected from several conceivable alternatives.\*

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\*The Dimitrov book, and the Seventh Congress generally, are (associated with the notion of the "Popular Front," which was originally set out as a new "tactical orientation" but which very quickly became the keystone of CP

Both the Dutt and the Togliatti books were written during that brief moment in 1934-35 when the Comintern line was in transit from "ultra-left" to right opportunist. Consequently, in accordance with the well-known principle that even a stopped clock is right twice a day, they come nearest of all the official Comintern pronouncements to an appreciation of the true origins and nature of fascism. Thus, they manage to avoid the sectarian exaggerations of the "third period"\*\*\* without falling into the rightist deviations of the "popular front" period, during which the independent interests of the proletariat were totally liquidated within the alliance of all "democratic forces."

The Dutt and Togliatti\*\*\* books are not without serious flaws, however, and we shall mention a few in the course of this essay. But the first point that cries out for recognition is the irony contained in their current popularity. Whatever else Comintern policy in relation to fascism was, it was not a success. From 1921 up to the eve of World War II, to the rhythm of accelera-

ting drum beats, the working class of one country after another witnessed its trade unions, established parties and cooperative societies fall before the advance of the fascists and their allies. The communists were not spared the general fate of the class; as Claudin puts it:

During the gloomy spring of 1939, after Franco's entry into Madrid and Hitler's into Prague, the only substantial section of the Comintern that remained on its feet in Europe was the French party. Apart from this, only the small Communist parties of Scandinavia, Britain, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland, whose political impact was almost nil, remained legal. All the other European sections had been reduced to clandestine existence after suffering heavy defeats. Soon after this the French party was to undergo the same fate: and the Second World War would begin.

. . . Thus, the Comintern had failed in the main aim it set itself at the outset of its exist-

ence — to wrest the working class from reformism and organize it politically and trade-union-wise, on revolutionary principles."<sup>2</sup>

It is undeniably the case that the fortunes of the Communist parties picked up with the outbreak of the War. But by that time, the Dutt, Togliatti and Dimitrov books were gathering dust on the back shelves; and one bit of evidence to show how useless they were as a guide to the future can be seen in the fact that in those areas of Europe where fascism held sway and where the Soviet Army did not pass, the outcome of the War was neither of the alternatives envisioned in the title of Dutt's work.

The Dutt, Togliatti and Dimitrov books represent, in a certain sense, an official blueprint of failure. Yet, a generation later, they are rediscovered and, what is more, enjoy a certain vogue. It is as if a doctor were to gain increased popularity owing to the fact that every one of his patients is known to have died directly following his treatment, or at the very least wound up as a

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strategy. This is not the place for a consideration of the methods of combatting fascism, which will be dealt with in a planned future article on revolutionary alliances. I cannot resist pointing out, however, that the Dimitrov book was published only one year before the Nazi-Soviet pact, when the line changed from the united front against fascism to — the united front with fascism. That odd timing has not seemed to hurt the book's popularity.

\*\*It was the so-called third period (1928-34) that contributed the immortal concept "social fascism" as the summary of the true nature of social democracy. The theoretical basis for this idiocy was most clearly articulated by Stalin when he declared that "Social-Democracy is objectively the moderate wing of fascism. . . . They are not antipodes, they are twins." (*Works*,

vol. 6, page 294) This was regarded as somehow more "revolutionary" than the reasonable observation that fascism takes advantage of the reformist illusions fostered by the social democrats. Stalin's formula was endlessly repeated and elaborated, for example by Comintern chief Manuilsky, who declared, "All too obvious mistakes are being made among us: it is said that bourgeois democracy and fascism, social democracy and Hitler's party, are antagonistic." (Report to Eleventh Plenum, 1931) Actually, the line went beyond equating social democracy and fascism: the German CP was insisting up to 1932 that "our political line . . . is to deal the main blow to the SPD (Social-Democrats)." One fruit of this was the formation of a *de facto* bloc with the Nazis, as in the "Red Referendum" of 1931. (See Poulantzas, fn. p. 160)

\*\*\*The Togliatti book is of interest for reasons that have nothing to do with the subject under consideration. In *The God That Failed* Ignazio Silone recounts how he and Togliatti were the only delegates to a 1927 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Comintern who had the temerity to resist Stalin's request that a certain document written by Trotsky be condemned without having been read by any of those present. This sort of "bourgeois individualism" led to Silone's expulsion from the Italian CP in 1931. In these *Lectures* Togliatti, who was more pliable, quotes something written by "ex-comrade" Silone. Those familiar with the Comintern personnel policy, especially toward communists in exile from fascist countries, will appreciate the significance of Togliatti's departure from the norm.

quadriplegic!

All three books answer the question What is fascism? by citing the famous definition put forward by the Thirteenth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (1933): "Fascism is the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital." Since this is undoubtedly the most familiar definition, and can often be quoted verbatim by leftists who could not, if asked, furnish the name under which Adolf Schicklgruber achieved world renown, it seems a good idea to check any conclusions reached against that definition. Therefore, we shall return to it later on.

This essay will attempt to consider, separately as much as possible, four topics relating to fascism. The first is — under what conditions does it arise?

### At What Stage of the Crisis?

All students agree that fascism makes its appearance at a time of crisis, a period in which the traditional methods of resolving social conflicts are no longer acceptable to any of the parties involved. The problem in analysis comes when the question is posed: at what stage of the crisis does fascism become a real possibility?

Dutt writes that fascism appears at that stage

when the breakdown of the old capitalist institutions and the advance of working-class movement has reached a point at which the working class should advance to the seizure of power, but when the working class is held in by reformist leadership.<sup>3</sup>

According to this view, fascism is "a species of preventive counter-revolution."<sup>4</sup>

This was the standard Comintern line. Thus, Dimitrov sees the drive toward fascism as a "striving to forestall the growth of the forces of revolution. . . ."<sup>5</sup> Both Dutt and Dimitrov regard fascism as a defen-

sive response on the part of the bourgeoisie; even when they speak of the fascist "offensive" it is clear that they view it as a counter-attack against the growing wave of the revolutionary offensive.

This is not so obvious as it seems. In his book, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, Nicos Poulantzas writes:

The beginning of the rise of fascism presupposes a significant series of working-class defeats. These defeats immediately precede fascism, and open the way to it. . . .

The meaning of this 'defeat' should be clarified. It was not 'the defeat' inflicted in a single day, but a series of defeats in a process marked by various steps and turns.<sup>6</sup>

The period of "relative stabilization" which followed the post-World War I revolutionary crisis in Europe is described by Poulantzas as a "significant weakening of the working class in the relation of forces" which, however, left intact most of the working class' economic gains made during the earlier period when it had the offensive. According to him, fascism was, in part, an attempt by the bourgeoisie to eliminate these gains which no longer corresponded to the real relation of class forces.

To Poulantzas, then, Germany in

the years 1929-33 is going through not an upsurge in the revolutionary process, but the last dying gasp of the crisis which the working class had failed to utilize properly in 1923.

Trotsky's position combines elements of both. Writing in 1930, he agrees with the Comintern that the present situation represents "not . . . the conclusion of a revolutionary crisis, but just . . . its approach." At the same time, he points out that "The German Communist Party did not come on the scene yesterday . . ." and that its record of disasters from 1923 to the present is a factor that weakens the ability of the working class to resist fascism.<sup>7</sup>

What difference does it make to the analysis if fascism is seen as rising up as a possibility concomitant-ly with communism on the eve of the revolutionary wave, or if it is regarded as something like a jackal, stalking and finally bringing down the wounded proletarian lion?

The difference is (I admit that this may be stretching too far) in the former case, fascism can be treated purely as the tool of the bourgeoisie, a tool which it wields more or less handily to beat back the workers' movement; in the latter case, fascism must be seen as a social phenomenon to some extent



Troops battle Spartakists, 1919, in first major defeat inflicted on German proletariat following World War I.

independent of the bourgeoisie, a phenomenon which arises out of the crisis of modern society and develops through the inter-action of a number of distinct causes — over-determined, as it were.† This brings me to the second topic I wish to take up: what is the relation of fascism to the bourgeoisie?

### Fascism and Finance Capital

The answer of the Comintern is clear and unmistakable: "Fascism is . . . a weapon of finance-capital . . ." (Dutt); "Fascism is the power of finance capital itself." (Dimitrov); ". . . it is the expression of the most reactionary sectors of the bourgeoisie." (Togliatti).

The Comintern writers go to great pains to expose the direct links that finance capital established with the fascists prior to the latter's coming to power; they produce volumes of evidence to show the flow of money from the big bourgeoisie to the treasuries of the fascist organizations.

All of this research is entirely irrelevant. The only points in a class analysis of fascism are — to what extent do the fascists serve the interests of capital (or any of its sectors) *and* to what extent is that service merely a by-product of the circumstances under which the fascist regime happens to emerge in a particular time and place.

"Totalitarian movements (here the writer is speaking of a phenomenon not exactly equivalent to fascism, but that does not matter for the present purposes) are mass organizations of atomized, isolated individuals."<sup>8</sup>

At the beginning of the period there is a revolutionary crisis (Italy 1920, Germany 1918-23) during which the working class shows itself unable to stand at the head of the efforts of the nation to reconstruct itself. At the critical moment it acts indecisively, and thus loses its moral authority over the middle sectors, who had rallied to it when it seemed to offer revolutionary solutions. The failure of the proletariat throws the masses, who have

been torn from their moorings, into despair. The fascists arrive on the scene and proceed to organize that despair into a powerful force.

"The success of totalitarian movements . . . meant the end of two illusions. . . . The first was that the people in its majority had taken an active part in government. . . . The second . . . was that these politically indifferent masses did not matter. . . ."<sup>9</sup>

The fascists combine the most violent denunciations of the existing order with a ferocious opposition to the Marxist organizations, accusing the latter of having proven their unfitness to head the nation, as they are guided by narrow self-interest and sectarian principles. Thus they are able to wield the homeless and the rootless among the populace, the people who have lost their sense of identification with any of the contending forces, into a solid force.

At first the fascists limit themselves to attacks on the workers' organizations. They break up meetings, burn down headquarters, commit violence against outstanding workers' representatives. At this stage they are tolerated and even encouraged by the bourgeoisie, which sees them as a force to use against the left.

As the social crisis deepens, the appeal of the fascists grows. While loudly proclaiming their revolutionary aims, they are in fact protected by the existing state, which lets their members off while jailing the workers who resist them. At a certain point the fascists become bolder in their aims, are no longer satisfied to act as a goon squad for the employers, but begin to have ambitions to rule. They expand their activity, and may even enter into genuine popular struggles, as for example the Berlin transport strike of 1932, which they led jointly with the Communists.††

The bourgeoisie is confronted with a choice: on the one hand, sectors among the class (particularly heavy industry) want to utilize the fascists to settle accounts with the

working class and also to shift the weight of authority among the ruling circles themselves; on the other hand, the fascists are an unknown quantity, a mass movement and, as such, not entirely predictable. The big capitalists ask for, and receive, guarantees from the fascists: the anti-capitalist propaganda is subtly shifted in favor of a campaign against "non-productive" capital; a fascist party chief who seems a bit too serious about the radical program is demoted. The bourgeoisie's mind is set at rest and the contributions flow freely again.

All this does not take place without a great deal of agonizing and doubt among the bourgeoisie. However, the process is now getting out of control. The fascists have built a mighty mass movement, out of the dregs of society — and, never quite out of mind, there stands the untamed proletariat, still capable of throwing up Soviets and workers' councils should the opportunity present itself. The matter is decided: the fascists carry out their "revolution" and march into power, carrying with them the hopes of the despairing masses and the best

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†There is no doubt that Dutt, for instance, was aware of the importance of "missed opportunity" in preparing the way for the advance of fascism. Thus, on page 126 he writes: "First, the revolutionary wave in Italy was broken . . . not by Fascism, but by its own inner weakness. . . . Second, Fascism only came to the front after the proletarian advance was already broken from within . . . harassing and slaughtering an army already in retreat." He never integrated this awareness into a general theory.

††Togliatti recounts how the Fascist club responds to a complaint from a woman about her husband beating her by summoning the man to headquarters, warning him and ordering him to put a stop to such treatment. (Togliatti, *op. cit.*, p. 143)



Clash between Nazis and Communists in 1933.

wishes of the bourgeoisie.

Trotsky makes the shrewd observation that:

The strength of finance capital does not reside in its ability to establish a government of any kind and at any time, according to its wish; it does not possess this faculty. Its strength resides in the fact that every non-proletarian government is forced to serve finance capital.  
...<sup>10</sup>

The fascists come into power and now begins an exceedingly complex series of maneuvers and readjustments. Their aims are directed first toward smashing the workers' organizations. At the same time, they are forced to rein in their own "left wing" — those plebian forces who take at face value the promises of revolution against the "vested interests." There follow several years of twists and turns, wherein the fascist party is purged of those elements that brought it to power (the famous "Night of the Long Knives" in Germany in 1934). At the same time, the fascists flood the state apparatus, displacing the remnants of the old bourgeois parties, and also place their representatives on the boards of directors of the big corporations. While this leads to an expansion of the prerogatives of the fascists relative to the old bourgeoisie, it also brings the former under some semblance of control, and the

fascist regime begins to assume the appearance of an ordinary regime of right-wing dictatorship.

This is the classical pattern, and so far it does not contradict the notion of fascism as a tool of the bourgeoisie.

If matters ended there, the Comintern interpretation would be relatively satisfactory. But matters do not end there. The fascists, while they have been forced by the relation of forces to bow to the wishes of the traditional bourgeoisie, have not lost their character as a "revolutionary" party. They are waiting for the proper opportunity to put their program into practice.

The outbreak of war gives them that opportunity. As is the case in every country, war expands the autonomous power of the state. It makes possible the establishment of all sorts of supervisory boards and the like, which once again tilt the balance of forces back toward the fascist party. For Hitler, the outbreak of war was a golden opportunity to implement the Nazi program of the master race, beginning with the physical extermination of the mentally ill and advancing to the "final solution" of the Jewish question.

Some of these measures are of no consequence one way or the other to the bourgeoisie. But some of them are definitely counter to its

interests. For example, the diversion of trains for the transportation of Jews, at a time when German supply lines were dangerously strained, was not in the rational interests of the bourgeoisie. The execution of Polish and Jewish skilled workers, which was carried out on ideological grounds, did not serve the interests of the Krupps and Farbens, who hoped to use those workers for production. Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of the contradiction between the fascist program and the rational needs of the bourgeoisie was Hitler's plan, in the event of Germany's defeat, to reduce the country to rubble, "to slam the door behind us, so that we shall not be forgotten for centuries."

These are not the actions of a class which is motivated by the drive for profits; they are the actions of a party with a vision. It is true that the Nazis were unable to carry out their entire program; toward the end of the War, even such a top-level personality as Himmler began dismantling the death camps (without informing Hitler) as a step toward re-establishing a more normal situation and making possible negotiations with the West. But if the ideological fascists were unable to realize their entire program, so were the ordinary bourgeois unable to tame them entirely: it should not be forgotten that the famous attempt of the generals to assassinate Hitler — which represented the "sane" wishes of the bourgeoisie — failed, and led to wider purges of the state and a tighter Nazi grip on policy.

These events cannot be explained by means of the Comintern formula for fascism as the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. It is necessary to recognize the relative autonomy of the fascist movement in relation to all classes, as an important feature that distinguishes it from other right-wing governments.

The observation by the contemporary Hungarian writer, Mihaly Vajda, is more accurate than the traditional Comintern view in describing the relations of fascism and

the capitalist class. Vajda writes:

that on the one hand fascism can only be accounted for if it is treated as a phenomenon of capitalist society, but that on the other hand it cannot be regarded as a movement which is actually launched by the ruling class, and that moreover it openly contradicts the interests of the ruling class in certain cases.<sup>11</sup>

### Reactionary, Chauvinistic, and Imperialist

The third point I wish to consider is the "chauvinism" of the fascists. Chauvinism is generally regarded as the extreme nationalism of an oppressor country. A careful study shows that fascism, in its German variety at least, was far beyond anything that had previously been recognized as nationalism. The aim of the Nazis was not the establishment of German supremacy, although they occasionally referred, for mass consumption, to that goal. The aim of the fascists was the establishment of the master race, which they insisted was just beginning to make its appearance, and which would be drawn from the "Aryan" elements of all the peoples of northern Europe. They repeated often that, for them, the conquest of the German state was simply a stage on the path to the reconstitution of Europe^ 'that fascism was a movement not a state. As Hannah Arendt points out, they treated Germany itself as a conquered nation, the first of all the nations of Europe to receive the benefits of their racial purification policies. It is no exaggeration at all to observe that fascism, far from being motivated by nationalist considerations, in fact tended toward *internationalism* — not of the proletarian type, to be sure.†††

Likewise with the label "imperialistic" that the Comintern used as part of its definition of fascism. The First World War was an imperialist war. As has been noted by a variety of observers, including W.E.B. DuBois and Lenin, it was

a war for colonies, a war to conquer territories (or defend already-conquered ones) to which the conquering power would profitably *export* capital. The aim of fascism (particularly the German variant) in the Second World War was not the export of capital but instead the annexation of entire territories with their population and natural resources — in other words, centralization of capital, the very opposite of export. Hitler's rule over Europe did not lead to the expansion of capital in the occupied areas, as would have been the case if capital were being exported to them, but to its reduction, as entire industries were dismantled and carted back to Germany and those that remained were reorganized to serve the needs, not of profit but of the war. If this was imperialism, it was a new stage and deserved to be recognized as such, something which the Comintern definition does not do.

Lastly, with regard to the term "reactionary." That is a fairly fluid term, and it may seem unduly harsh to challenge a term so devoid of specific content. Nevertheless, it is part of the Comintern definition of fascism and should not be allowed to pass without scrutiny. If it means anything, the term "reactionary" applies to those who would go back, who would revert to more primitive social and technological conditions. It is precisely the unique character of fascism that it combined the crudest, the most oppressive, the most ahistorical conceptions of the human personality with the most modern methods of mass production and social engineering. The restructuring of the army, the mobilization of all the resources of Germany and the conquered territories, the adoption of the techniques of the Blitzkrieg, the coordination of military efforts with the pro-Nazi movements in every country — these things shattered the traditional ideas of how things were done. They were supported by that sector of the bourgeoisie which was the most advanced, and were resisted by that sector which was the most reac-

tionary — the traditionalists, the old officer corps, the Prussian nobility.

### "Terrorist"

In his report to the Seventh World Congress, Dimitrov announced that, "The accession to power of fascism is not an *ordinary succession* of one bourgeois government by another, but a *substitution* of one state form of class domination of the bourgeoisie — bourgeois democracy — by another form — open terrorist dictatorship."<sup>12\*</sup>†

The fourth topic I wish to take up is — what is the character of this "open terrorist dictatorship?"\*†† There can be no denying the terrorist character of the fascist regime — terror on a scale previously un-

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†††can be pointed out that internationalism does not have to assume a proletarian character. The Catholic Church is also internationalist. So was the Comintern when it called for the proletarians of all countries to identify their class interests with the state interests of the USSR.

\*†Perhaps some might observe a difference between this and Manuilsky's remarks of a few years earlier: "The fact that the bourgeoisie will be obliged to repress the workers' movement by fascist methods does not mean that the hierarchy will not govern as before (that is with the participation or support of the social democracy). Fascism is not a new governmental method distinct from the system of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Anyone who thinks this is a liberal." (Quoted by Poulantzas, *op. cit.*, page 149)

\*††Gus Hall, in his Introduction to Togliatti's *Lectures*, comments that "Fascism . . . especially tries to cover up the fact that it is 'the open dictatorship of the most reactionary section of monopoly capital.'" (page xi) Is he unconscious of the humor involved in "covering up" what is "open"?

known. But it is not merely the scale of terror that distinguishes fascism from other forms of dictatorship — autocracy, military rule, etc. — even when we allow that the expansion of terror has given it a "qualitatively" new aspect. Previous regimes aimed at the suppression of conscious opponents. Fascism, after the first few years of breaking up the opposition parties, moves toward the establishment of the totalitarian state.

The characteristic of the totalitarian state is not merely suppression of the opposition, but total domination of the lives of the subjects. This is brought about in part through the use of terror. Even this terror has a special character — it is no longer directed at individuals and organizations that have placed themselves in opposition to the regime, but is directed at large groups of the population that have given no particular reason to doubt their loyalty: Jews, Poles, Gypsies, the mentally ill, those with congenital defects, etc. The concentration camps were filled with people who were absolutely "innocent" in every sense except that they had the misfortune to fall into one of the targeted groups.

The second feature of the totalitarian state is that it not merely suppresses the defense organizations of the proletariat; after having smashed up the proletarian organizations and having reduced the population to a grouping of atomized individuals with no ties of group interests, it then proceeds to reorganize these fragmented beings into mass organizations that reach into every sphere of life — the workplace, the school, the community. It is not enough that opposition should be suppressed; the masses must be brought to cooperate with the new regime, to participate actively in its mass rallies, sport societies, re-education sessions. No form of autonomous activity can be permitted; art, music, sport and even chess are of value only to the extent they are "weapons."\*†††



Mussolini addresses Milan rally in 1936.

It is well known that the slogan that motivated the Communist Party in Germany right up to — and beyond — the coming to power of the Nazis was — After Hitler, Our Turn! They consistently underestimated the possibility of a fascist victory (a mistake for which they later criticized themselves) but also, even after the victory, underestimated the seriousness of the defeat this entailed. As late as 1935, in his remarks at the Seventh World Congress, Dimitrov was still whistling in the graveyard about how "the Communist Party even in conditions of illegality continues to make progress, becomes steeled and tempered. . .,"<sup>13</sup>

Of all the major figures in the left-wing movement of the time, only Trotsky, to my knowledge, had any appreciation of what the victory of fascism would mean to the working class. In words which all those who snarl when they hear the name "Trotsky" should be forced to read, he wrote, in 1931, *before* the victory of the Nazis:

The coming to power of the National Socialists would mean first of all the extermination of the flower of the German proletariat, the destruction of its organizations, the eradication of its belief in itself and in its future. Considering the far greater maturi-

ty and acuteness of the social contradictions in Germany, the hellish work of Italian fascism would probably appear as a pale and almost humane experiment in comparison with the work of the German National Socialists.

Retreat, you say, you who were yesterday the prophets of the "third period." Leaders and institutions can retreat. Individual persons can hide. But the working class will have no place to retreat to in the face of fascism, and no place to hide. If one were to admit the monstrous and improbable, that the party will actually evade the struggle and thus deliver the proletariat to the mercy of its mortal enemy, this would signify only one thing: the gruesome battles would unfold not *before* the seizure of power by the fascists but *after* it, that is, under conditions ten times more favorable for fascism than those of today. The struggle against a fascist regime by a proletariat betrayed by its own leadership, taken by surprise, disoriented, despairing, would be transformed into a series of frightful, bloody, and futile convulsions. Ten proletarian insurrections, ten defeats, one on top of the other, could not debilitate and enfeeble the German working class as much as a retreat before fascism would weaken it at the very moment when the decision is still impending on the question of who is to become master in the German household."<sup>14</sup>

To what extent did the fascist regime, even in its most completely realized form — Nazism, succeed in subordinating all strata of society to its total domination? There is abundant evidence dealing with this question in relation to the big bourgeoisie, and there the answer seems to be — not very much. As Guerin put it, "The fascist regime . . . never

domesticated the bourgeoisie."<sup>15</sup> It must be remembered, as an explanation of the fascist failure in this regard, that the German bourgeoisie, even though it was undergoing a crisis, was by no means a weak social formation. It is not inconceivable that, in other circumstances, where the bourgeoisie is mortally wounded, the fascist mob could succeed in bringing it under its domination or even eliminating it totally as a class distinct from the heads of the state and the fascist movement. Suppose, for a moment, a situation where the bourgeoisie was exhausted, divided, unable to command any longer the respect of the population, but where the working class is not sufficiently conscious and organized to rule as a class. Could a mob inflamed by radical slogans without class content come to power and proceed to expropriate the bourgeoisie while retaining the essential feature of bourgeois social relations, namely the domination of the living laborer by previously accumulated, congealed, dead labor? Perhaps "fascist" would not be the best term to apply to such a regime, but would it not exhibit many of the features of the fascist state? How would such a regime stay in power? Most likely, it would combine violent denunciations of the old system of private property, resting on the masses' bitter memories of private exploitation, with constant appeals for vigilance lest the old way be restored. It would strengthen the state apparatus, and scornfully dismiss appeals for free speech and press as opening the door for the class enemy to return. Lastly, it would mobilize the population by means of a constant and deafening clamor of propaganda, officially approved mass organizations in every sphere of life, public rallies and demonstrations, supervised collective study and character re-molding, perhaps through some device like the Catholic confessional or ritual group discussions of individual errors. (I beg to remind the reader that all this is pure speculation, since no such regime ever has

existed or could exist anywhere in the world.)

### The Working Class

Of course, for us, the more important question is the success of fascism in liquidating the working class. (Recall the words of Mussolini — the working class when it is not organized is not a class but a mob.) The evidence here is sparse. It is obvious that Italian fascism never brought about the total atomization of the proletariat. The situation regarding Germany is not so clear. Several things indicate, however, that the fascist success was not as great as has been alleged. In the first place, there is the large number of German workers who found themselves in the camps. Based on what I said earlier, that the Nazi regime attacked the "innocent" as well as the "guilty," this cannot be offered as conclusive evidence. Second, the rapidity with which the German people set up autonomous institutions to regulate the distribution of allied relief food in the West immediately following the War provides some evidence that the germs of proletarian aspirations had not entirely been stamped out. It may very well be that the very speed of the occupation, especially in the east, where the Soviets moved immediately to establish their control over the police, functioned to prevent the emergence of more visible proof that the German proletariat had, indeed, survived the scourge of Nazism.

To return to the official Comintern definition: I think I have demonstrated that every element in the definition is either mistaken, inadequate or subject to serious questioning. It should be laid to rest.

\* \* \*

### FOOTNOTES

1. *The MIR and the Tasks of the Resistance*, Resistance Courier, Special Edition, Number 1, pages 53-4.
2. F. Claudin: *The Communist Movement*, Monthly Review Press, 1975, pages 242-3.
3. R. Palme Dutt: *Fascism and Social Revolution*, International, 1935, page 108.
4. *Ibid.*, page 113 (emphasis in original).
5. Dimitrov: *The United Front*, International, 1938, page 9.
6. N. Poulantzas: *Fascism and Dictatorship*, New Left Books, London 1974, page 139.
7. L. Trotsky: *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, Pathfinder, NY 1971, pages 59-62.
8. H. Arendt: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Meridian, NY 1958, page 323. I cannot possibly recommend this book too enthusiastically, especially the third section, "On Totalitarianism."
9. *Ibid.*, page 312.
10. Trotsky, *op. cit.*, page 440.
11. M. Vajda: *Fascism as a Mass Movement*, Allison & Busby, London 1976, page 8.
12. Dimitrov, *op. cit.*, page 12.
13. *Ibid.*, page 26.
14. Trotsky, *op. cit.*, page 125.
15. D. Guerin: *Fascism and Big Business*, Pathfinder, NY 1973, page 9.



# Correspondence

## MORE ON FASCISM

Dear Comrades:

In *Urgent Tasks* number 4, Noel Ignatin criticized the old Comintern definition of fascism, using it as a foil to bring some much-needed new ideas into the discussion of fascism. In the face of the growing offensive of the right, which no doubt includes some would-be Hitlers, it is necessary to smash out of the confines of the usual left dogmas. However, I would like to raise two points where I think Noel has made mistakes.

First, Noel simply defines out of existence all examples of fascism which are likely to defy his analysis.

The indiscriminate use of a term which is meant to apply to a specific form of rule that arises in definite circumstances can and does obscure the reality of modern society and the forms of social motion which appear within it, including the emergence of a revolutionary social bloc. (page 25)

Quite right. But he goes on to discuss almost exclusively Germany under the Nazis. In fact, except for two passing references to Italy, the entire refutation of the Comintern definition relies on the German example.

What argument about fascism can dismiss so quickly the first movement to call itself Fascist? Or the many other countries whose regimes often aligned themselves with the Nazis, and were commonly referred to as fascist, such as Spain, Hungary, Romania, Lithuania, Poland and Austria, among others? One of Hannah Arendt's best points in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is that the Nazis (and, according to her, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) were a new type of "government," qualitatively different from these other regimes (including Italy), all of which became more ordinary one-party dictatorships.

The latter did not involve dynamic movements that constantly created new fronts to hide behind; they did not massacre huge sections of their own populations (compare the fates of the Basques and the German Jews); they did not have pretensions to world mastery. All of these governments used nationalist appeals — and, at least in the case of Italy, foreign adventures — to mobilize the population to greater exploitation in the name of the future.

These regimes certainly were chauvinist, terrorist (aiming mainly at "the suppression of conscious opponents"), and as imperialist as they could manage. For instance, the Balkans in the thirties were a hotbed of national oppression and complicated state-inspired subversions among Yugoslavia, Albania, Hungary, and the rest. At least the Comintern definition has a chance with these regimes. However, I agree with Noel (and the MIR) that it lacks value in describing various non-fascist military dictatorships, such as present-day Chile. I also tend to believe that it doesn't adequately describe Ethiopia or Afghanistan, although the Eritrean People's Liberation Front has made a plausible case for the former.

Germany was a special case that cannot be assimilated to one-party dictatorships, such as Italy; military dictatorships, such as Chile; or bourgeois democratic empires, such as the United States. The Nazis were masters of the creation of organizations and "movements" in a constant political shell game. They carried out massacres on a really incomprehensible scale. They definitely saw themselves as a European movement, and actively aspired to world domination. Their relation to the German bourgeoisie was at least ambiguous; the Nazis themselves certainly despised the capitalists as small thinkers.\*

But Noel misses two important

points in the following passage:

The aim of the Nazis was not the establishment of German supremacy, although they occasionally referred, for mass consumption, to that goal. The aim of the fascists was the establishment of the master race, which they insisted was just beginning to make its appearance, and which would be drawn from the "Aryan" elements of all the peoples of northern Europe. They repeated often that, for them, the conquest of the German state was simply a stage on the path to the reconstitution of Europe, that fascism was a movement, not a state. As Hannah Arendt points out, they treated Germany itself as a conquered nation, the first of all the nations of Europe to receive the benefits of their racial purification policies. It is no exaggeration at all to observe that fascism, far from being motivated by nationalist considerations, in fact tended toward *internationalism* — not of the proletarian type, to be sure, (page 30)

First, the Nazis conflated "Aryan" with "Germanic." The "Aryan elements" they intended to mobilize were the remnants of the waves of Germanic tribes that overran Europe in the first millennium A.D. (The history of this notion is in G. L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*.) This explains both the

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\*The bourgeoisie, for their part, probably laughed at allegations that *they* controlled the Nazis. The I. G. Farben plant at Auschwitz had to settle for 75% efficiency from its workers because the SS refused to feed them adequately, since they were to be gassed anyway. And after four years, worker resistance, combined with conflicts with the extermination goals of the SS, yielded this result:

Despite the investment of almost 900 million Reichsmarks and thousands of lives, only a modest stream of fuel and not a single pound of Buna rubber was ever produced. (J. Borkin, *The Crime and Punishment of I. G. Farben*, Free Press, page 127)

partiality of the Nazis to the northern European nations (which Noel mentions), e.g., the formation of French, Dutch, etc. Waffen SS divisions, but not Italian, Spanish, or Greek SS; and the antagonism between Hitler, Franco and Mussolini. (Italy and Germany almost went to war over the Austrian Anschluss in 1938.) On the other hand, their notion of Aryan certainly excluded the descendents of Aryan-speakers in Iran. In fact, they didn't include any non-northern-Europeans in their master race — not even their allies, the Japanese military elite.

Second, the Nazis did carry out a process which admitted most Germans to the privileges of Aryanism: the process of making Germany "Judenrein," or Jew-pure:

... the Nazis gave their members at least the psychological equivalent for the initiation ritual of secret societies when, instead of simply excluding Jews from membership, they demanded proof of non-Jewish descent from their members and set up a complicated machine to shed light on the dark ancestry of some 80 million Germans. It was of course a comedy, and even an expensive one, when 80 million Germans set out to look for Jewish grandfathers; yet everybody came out of the examination with the feeling that he belonged to a group of included which stood against an imaginary multitude of ineligible. (H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Meridian edition, page 377)

Hitler said, "World Empires spring from a national basis, but they expand soon far beyond it." (Quoted in *ibid.*, page 359) The world empire springing from the German nation was to be based on the "Germanic race." That is why Hitler also said, "Incidentally, I am not the head of a state in the sense of a dictator or monarch, but I am a leader of the German people." (Quoted in *ibid.*, page 357) This is a notion so rooted and soaked in the swamp of "extreme nationalism of an oppressor country" as easily to rate the name of national chau-

vinism.

What is the significance of all this for us as we confront the right-wing offensive? First, the atomization of the white workers in the U.S. — i.e., a loss of any sense of an identity within society that is the basis for a Nazi-like movement — is decisively held back by the system of white supremacy. As long as white skin privilege persists, the white workers will continue to feel at home in the white oppressor nation, located in their minds in a definite social location: on top of Third World peoples. No such alternative to both atomization and class consciousness existed in Weimar Germany. From a different angle, Don Hamerquist once wrote:

... So long as the bulk of the white working class sees its interests mainly in terms of skin color, not class position, the likelihood of fascist rule being extended to the society as a whole is minimal. The dominance of the white supremacy within the white sections of the working class works effectively against the development of a mass revolutionary movement on that terrain. However, at least some elements of such a movement are needed to mount a serious challenge to U.S. capitalism. Since this serious revolutionary threat is a necessary factor to convince the ruling class of the necessity of fascism, it follows that, contrary to Litt's assertions, there is little likelihood that the ruling class will resort to fascism to "maintain social control" over the working class as a whole while white supremacy is doing such an admirable job. To a large degree bourgeois democracy in this country is a white privilege. (*Fascism in the U.S.?*, STO, page 6)

Second, I believe that the model for U.S. fascism we must look at is Nationalist South Africa, rather than Nazi Germany. Both the U.S. and South Africa are white settler colonies with large populations of white workers. Both have a history of opposition to British imperialism, and a tradition of frontier democracy based on the internal

oppression of Third World peoples. In contrast to the U.S., though, South Africa is ruled by a popularly-based white party, the Nationalist Party, which has put the country on a permanent war footing; brought the government into the economy in a big way; and which has responded even to white dissent with a range of repression from house arrest to hanging. (Of course, this still, with a few exceptions, doesn't touch the magnitude or severity of the response to Black dissent.) It is controlled by a semi-secret society with a stable structure, the Afrikaner Broederbond, which bears a striking resemblance to the Ku Klux Klan — right down to the pose of anti-imperialism (either against British or Northern imperialism, as in "Free the land — join the Klan"). These differences between the current situations in the U.S. and South Africa are why the latter can be described as fascist, while the former cannot.

Although most elements of the Comintern definition of fascism should be discarded, we must not neglect the importance of white national chauvinism in U.S. fascism. As the present crisis deepens, we must be ever-vigilant to the growth of a U.S. fascist movement.

Dan Robie  
STO — San Francisco

*Reply:* I concentrated my attention on Germany because I believe it represented most fully the *type* I was studying. This is the Marxist theoretical method, to identify a social phenomenon and seek to discover how it would look when fully developed. Thus Marx based *Capital* on a study of England, although at the time he was writing, English society was no more representative of the average form of capitalism than Nazi Germany represented the "average" fascism. Robie's citing Spain, Hungary, Romania, Lithuania, etc. (which were not universally regarded as fascist even in their own day) or Italy can refute me only if he is using these cases to

make one of two points: (1) that Germany was an individual deviation from the fascist type, or (2) that there is no fascist type.

There is some truth in Dan's criticism that I "define out of existence" examples which defy my analysis, but that is my right. Definitions are not right or wrong; they are useful or not useful. I think it is useful to differentiate fascism from other forms of right-wing dictatorship; the key element in my definition that serves this purpose is the important role of the autonomous mass movement.

On Robie's second point: the racialism of the Nazis was not an outgrowth of nationalism but the negation of it. Hitler's myth of the "Germanic race" had no more relation to the realities of nationhood in Europe than would a similar myth of a "Celtic race" including the Irish, Welsh, Scottish, Cornish and Breton peoples of today. Imagine a "Celtic Hitler" who set out to "Celticize" Spain, France and southern Europe all the way to Turkey — all areas where Celtic languages were once spoken and where Celtic peoples have mingled their blood with others to give rise to modern nations!

Finally, I urge Dan Robie to elaborate the point (which he drops in passing) that the U.S. is a white settler colony. I and other readers of *Urgent Tasks* would, I'm sure, love to debate that one.

Noel Ignatin

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# Theses on Fascism

1. Central to STO's approach to the question of fascism has always been its understanding of the historic operation of the white-skin privilege system as a means of social control over white workers as well as people of color, and the view that so long as that system continued to function through the traditional institutions, the bourgeoisie as a class would have no reason to turn to fascism to maintain its rule. We affirm the above insight as having been valid and useful in steering STO on a course opposed to all forms of popular front reformism. However, we failed to appreciate fully the complexities of white supremacy, and in particular the fact that, once established, it developed a life of its own not entirely under the control of the bourgeoisie. This aspect, coupled with a new situation in which white supremacist ideology has become an important weapon in the revival of the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazis, demonstrates the inadequacy of our previous writings.

2. Among the features that define the new situation are: (a) the loss of U.S. capitalism's overriding dominance within the world capitalist system; (b) an economic crisis that is leading to the decay of certain areas of industrial activity traditionally the center of capitalist strength; (c) a social crisis that has led to a rapid decline in popular loyalty to traditional institutions — without the development of a popular vision of the revolutionary way out of the crisis. If the communist movement does succeed in gaining a following among the workers, sectors of the bourgeoisie will probably strengthen their backing of fascist movements.

3. Fascism is a totalitarian dictatorship coming to power through a mass movement of sectors of the dispossessed that breaks up the traditional institutions of bourgeois control and brings about important structural changes both within the ruling class and in the mode of exploitation while leaving intact the relations characteristic of a class society in the modern epoch.

4. To understand fascism as growing out of the crises endemic to capitalism is not to say that it is a simple tool of the capitalist class. One important element in fascism is its autonomous character, expressed in a mass movement among sectors of the population who have been dislocated by the capitalist crisis and alienated from the traditional institutions of conciliation and repression. Fascism contains an anti-capitalist "revolutionary" side that is not reducible to simple demagoguery.

5. To point out the autonomous aspect of fascism is not to deny its intimate connections with the needs of the capitalist class. The growth of state repression and extra-legal right-wing organizations, tolerated and often covertly assisted by the state, while not fascist in itself, is necessary for the implementation of bourgeois policy and serves to ease the way for fascism. Certain sectors of the bourgeoisie may find a fascist movement useful in enhancing their own power within the ruling class (to discover, too late, that their ox, too, will be gored). And opportunism within the working class, which depends on the bourgeoisie for its authority and whose main form here is not European-style social democracy or revisionism but white labor reformism, while not fascist itself and indeed slated to be among the first victims of triumphant fascism, nevertheless prepares the way for fascism both by providing legitimacy to bourgeois policy and by offering the people only more of the same reformist politics which they have already found wanting.

6. Although no single, hegemonic fascist movement can yet be said to have emerged, there exist a number of groupings which contain some of the elements of such a movement. The traditional conservatives, who have increasingly adopted "populist" rhetoric, the far-right para-military patriotic organizations, the anti-busing and anti-abortion activists, the various Klan organizations, some of whom have always contained a "pro-labor" ingredient, the U.S. Labor Party, the Nazi Party — all of these are undergoing a process of differentiation, evolution and regroupment that may lead to the emergence of a single fascist center. The Klan and Nazi movements have achieved a higher degree of ideological unity and practical military collaboration than their organizational fragmentation would indicate. The most immediately dangerous among the above-named groupings is the Ku Klux Klan, owing to its para-military character and its deep roots in American tradition.

7. In addition to the primary anti-Black and other racist manifestations, virulent anti-Jewish policies, sometimes masquerading as anti-Zionism, are important unifying ideological features of the new fascists, as in the past. The denial of the Nazi Holocaust (propagated by the very organizations that propose exterminating Jews and people

of color) is an important propaganda front, and needs to be countered. This propaganda offensive has been accompanied by a wave of anti-Semitic terror unequalled in recent years. The virulence of this anti-Semitic campaign often gets boosted demagogically with a bogus expression of sympathy for the plight of the Palestinian people. Despite the obvious difficulties, the anti-fascist movement will need to expose and vigorously fight the new wave of anti-Semitism, while never wavering on Palestine.

8. To the extent that fascism becomes a mass movement, and to the extent that revolution is not an immediate possibility, the revolutionary organizations must adopt the stance of the united front, which is a defensive posture aimed at achieving an alliance for the sole purpose of stopping the fascist advance. Within that alliance, however, it is necessary to criticize certain incorrect approaches which currently hold sway. Foremost among these are: first, the view that it is possible to defeat fascism through reliance on liberal, constitutional sectors of the bourgeoisie and their representatives in the popular movement; second, the view that holds fascism and the bourgeois state to be identical, therefore overlooking the autonomous character of the fascist movement which is an important source of its dangerous potential.

9. Key to a successful struggle against fascism is the forging of a left pole within the broad united front, distinguished by the following features: (a) it recognizes the organic connection between fascism and "ordinary" bourgeois rule and carries out struggles in a way that reveals the connection, particularly challenging the ways in which white supremacy is reflected in the general repression — cutbacks in social services, inner-city plant shutdowns, etc.; (b) while defending parliamentary institutions, trade unions, etc., against fascist attacks, it poses a total revolutionary alternative to both the vision of the fascists and the present hegemonic view of bourgeois society; (c) it is able to fight the fascists militarily, through mass, armed confrontations and disruptions of fascist military activity.

adopted by the general membership meeting, April 1981

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# Comment on Theses

by Noel Ignatin

The theses published here were adopted by the general membership of the Sojourner Truth Organization at a meeting in April 1981. Thus, unlike many articles that appear in *Urgent Tasks*, they represent "official" STO line. The theses as finally adopted were the product of a fairly long process of discussion and development, going back, in the case of some individuals, to before the founding of STO. In this article, I shall attempt to elaborate some of the ideas expressed in the theses, and discuss them in relation to other ideas which were rejected. Although it is probably inevitable that, in this article, I place my own "shading" on the theses, I shall try as much as possible to avoid doing so. My purpose here is to explain and defend the themes that separate STO from other organizations on the left.\*

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\*Those who wish to know more about the history of the discussion should read, along with this article, "Fascism in the U.S.?" by Don Hamerquist, published as a pamphlet by STO; "Fascism: Some Common Misconceptions" by this writer, published in *Urgent Tasks* Number 4; the exchange of letters between Dan Robie and this writer, published in *Urgent Tasks* Number 9; "Fascism: Then and Now" by Joe Acero, published in *Urgent Tasks* Number 11; and the special issue of the discussion bulletin on fascism and the Ku Klux Klan, all of which are available from STO, P. O. Box 8493, Chicago, IL 60680.

The most direct formulation of STO's traditional position is probably contained in Don Hamerquist's pamphlet, "Fascism in the U.S.?" where it states: ". . . there is little likelihood that the ruling class will resort to fascism to 'maintain social control' over the working class as a whole while white supremacy is doing such an admirable job."

Since fascism is a dangerous weapon for those wielding it, the bourgeoisie will not choose to take it up so long as other, more ordinary methods of social control are still performing adequately. In Europe, the "ordinary" method was social democracy, the tying of a section of the working class to capital through the influence of reformism. In the U.S. this dynamic takes the form of white supremacy, maintained by the white-skin privilege, which, while by no means eliminating conflict between capitalists and white labor, confines the struggle to limits acceptable to capital as a whole by preventing the struggle of white workers from advancing beyond group interests to *class* interests. Contrary to those who hold that democracy for white North Americans depends on its denial to people of color inside and outside U.S. borders, STO asserts the reverse: that the ability of U.S. imperialism to oppress and plunder people of color in this country and around the world depends on the maintenance of at least the forms of democracy for white people, including white workers, as a

means of ensuring their support for its aggressive and reactionary policies everywhere.

This theme has been put forward and elaborated in any number of places, and was specifically affirmed in the first thesis. The problem comes with the tendency to regard as static the bourgeoisie's policy of basing its rule on the white-skin privilege system, and to fail to see that the implementation of that policy leads to the creation of certain conditions which undermine its effectiveness.

In the pamphlet by Don Hamerquist quoted earlier, it states, "So long as the bulk of the white working class sees its interests mainly in terms of skin color, not class position, the likelihood of fascist rule being extended to the society as a whole is minimal." ! At first glance, this sentence appears as simply a restatement of the one quoted earlier and affirmed in the theses, but a closer look reveals that not to be the case. The earlier statement says that the ruling class I (I take that to mean bourgeois class as a whole) will not opt for fascism — not the same thing as saying that the chances of fascism coming to power are minimal.

The bourgeois policy depends both on the continued existence of white supremacy and its confinement within limits which must be continually redefined but which nevertheless are real at any given moment. In the period following the overthrow of Reconstruction, bourgeois policy called for the disfranchisement of the former slaves and their restriction to the status of agricultural and service workers. In the years during and after World War I, the bourgeoisie sought to use Black workers as unskilled laborers in certain mass production industries, steel and meatpacking in particular. Later on, in the post-World War II expansion, the bourgeoisie needed Black labor on the assembly line and the mass production machines in auto, rubber, etc. This required a new definition of the status of the Black worker as semiskilled labor.

In no case were the new limits the simple consequence of a decision made by the executive committee of the ruling class, but were the result of a complicated struggle involving different factions of the ruling class, Black labor, and white workers. For instance, there were a number of strikes of white workers in the southern railroads during the last decades of the nineteenth century, strikes whose aim was to drive the Black engineers and firemen off the trains and maintain the industry as a white preserve. Of course, in that case, the bourgeoisie as a whole — as distinct from the owners of the rail lines affected — was only too happy to accept the "closed shop" sought by white labor, as it reinforced bourgeois hegemony in general and wasn't very costly in terms of labor needs in a particular industry. Almost a century later, the presence or absence of Black workers in different maintenance trades in the steel industry,

which varied from mill to mill, was not a matter of great concern to the ruling class as a whole, and would be determined by the amount of pressure each side brought to bear in a specific situation. So long as the principle of "white first" was upheld, it made little difference to the bourgeoisie how the matter was resolved in each specific situation.

Two points need to be stressed here: first, that white supremacy originated in bourgeois policy, not in the heads of any sector of workers, and had to be imposed on the entire working class; second, that for its implementation, it depended and continues to depend on the support of white workers, which requires extending to them a certain voice in determining how the general policy is carried out.

To repeat, in general in the past the adjustment of the white supremacist contract posed little problem to the bourgeoisie as a class, whatever problems it may have posed to the managers of any particular industry or enterprise. But what if this shall no longer be the case? What if the masses of white workers, organized in support of the principle of white first, decide to go beyond the limits required by capital, go beyond them to a degree that is not acceptable to capital, and succeed in imposing their will on capital?

This is the precise point that was not taken up by STO's traditional treatment of the operation of the white-skin privilege system. It can no longer be ignored. For three centuries now, white workers have been mobilized behind bourgeois race policies. They have been encouraged to defend their interests as "white workers" rather than as workers, have been rewarded for doing so and been savagely punished on the rare occasions when they have set aside their whiteness and extended the hand of class solidarity to Black labor.

At the present moment, the entire working class, including those sectors of European descent, is facing a crisis of unprecedented proportions. Some of its features are enumerated in our second thesis; they could be formulated more dramatically without exceeding the bounds of truth. People in such a situation will not be satisfied with routine activity. They will take action in ways that challenge the most fundamental assumptions of the society in which they live. In doing so, they will begin with the attitudes that have been developed throughout their history and have made them what they are today. While we would never assert that white racism is the only determinant of white workers' behavior, neither do we regard it as something that they will spontaneously shed in the course of militant struggles against hard times. The dictatorship of the white proletariat, as a slogan, has more than a small chance of attracting a popular following in the coming period. Could a movement organized around such a slogan, or some variant of it, exercise an influence on official policy?

Could it share power? Could it take power on its own? Anyone who knows the United States knows that none of these questions can be answered easily in the negative.

The third thesis is our attempt to provide a capsule definition of fascism. It is, of course, meant to be counterposed to the well-known Comintern definition, "the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital." Two points are stressed here: the role of a mass movement involving sectors of the dispossessed in bringing fascism to power (a point elaborated in the following thesis) and the fact that fascism in power "brings about important structural changes both within the ruling class and in the mode of exploitation. . . ." One point was left deliberately vague: is fascism capitalism or does it represent a new form of class society based on the appropriation of a surplus product through some mechanism other than the value form? Fascism tends to introduce, in place of the free market and competition between blocks of capital, state-directed and even state-owned industry functioning through a planned economy. It tends to introduce, in place of free labor exploited through the wage system, a labor force exploited by means of direct compulsion. Can such a society, which was not fully realized in any of the fascist countries but which is a theoretical possibility, still be considered capitalist? It is not a matter of which swear word one chooses to apply to an evil way of life, but a matter of determining whether such a society would operate according to the laws of capitalism, in particular the law of value and the law of the tendency of the falling rate of profit. At least one writer\*\* has labeled the system "trans-capitalist," while maintaining that in Germany the transcending elements were "encapsulated" in capitalism. This whole question of trans-capitalist elements comes up again in attempting an analysis of Soviet society. Some of the fascists themselves were and are aware of the parallels between the two: there was a wing of German Nazism — not the dominant wing, it is true — that sought an accord with Russia, not simply for military and geo-political reasons but because they recognized a convergence of the two systems. In Britain today there is one avowedly fascist group that is pro-Soviet, while in the U.S. the most theoretically inclined of the fascist publicists are by no means anti-Soviet.

To return to something mentioned earlier: what would be the difference between the "dictatorship of the white proletariat" and the white labor opportunism that has characterized so much of U.S. history?


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\*\*Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Economy and Class Structure of German Fascism*, CSE Books, London, 1978, page 30.

**OUTLAW  
NUCLEAR  
KILLERS!**

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**A fascist leaflet recently distributed in Chicago.**

The difference is between reformism and "revolution." Fascism in the U.S., coming to power on the crest of a movement that promised a "revolution of the common (white) man," could quite conceivably take serious measures against individual bourgeois or even against the bourgeoisie as a class. The Ku Klux Klan has always billed itself as the representative of the poor whites. Its programs have sought to embody that conception. (That is why those who attack the KKK as always "anti-union" are so far off the mark.) Up to now, the Klan and similar groups have been subordinated to bourgeois policy. But that will not always necessarily be the case. Fascism in power in the U.S. will be both more genocidal against people of color and more radical in its attacks on capital than anything seen so far. What we are talking about is the dialectic in operation. Bourgeois rule gives rise to the elements of its own negation. Socialism is one possible negation. It is not the only one.

An example which may illuminate this point: in 1922, white South African miners struck against the mine operators' attempts to bring in low-paid Black

labor to cut wages in the mines. The white miners, instead of organizing the Blacks into the union to fight along with the rest, sought to exclude them from the industry altogether. This strike was extremely militant, and led to the formation of Soviets (!) in the mining districts. At one point the struggle grew so intense that the South African government dropped explosive shells from airplanes onto the miners' settlements; the only similar case I know of the capitalists bombing workers from the air in a labor dispute was a few years earlier during a miners' strike in West Virginia. The South African miners were defeated, but the conflict led to the establishment of a new political accord which extended monopoly job control in certain industries to the white workers, and their incorporation into the process of shaping South African labor policies. The miners were defeated by superior force. Was their defeat inevitable? More to the point, could a similar situation arise where the outcome was different? And could one find a better term than fascism to apply to a regime organized around white supremacist Soviets?

It is well known that German Nazism contained a radical wing that took seriously the platform of anti-capitalism. Its slogan was: there can be no nationalism without socialism. The radical wing of Nazism was defeated by Hitler, in response to the demands of the big bourgeoisie, which made its defeat a condition for his being permitted to hold power. In that case, the big bourgeoisie was strong enough to impose its will on the fascist mob. But — and this is the point I keep stressing — such an outcome is not necessarily determined in advance. If the bourgeoisie is weaker, if the society is in greater crisis, if the mob is less disciplined by the fascist party. . . .

Conditions in Germany and elsewhere were such that fascism could only come to power in coalition with a sector of the bourgeoisie. In that fact lies the explanation for the vital role of anti-Semitism in the fascist ideology. Anti-Semitism provides a mythical ruling class target for the fascist attacks, that permits the fascist party to be radical without directly confronting the entire capitalist class. Attacks on "usurers" and "war profiteers" served the same purpose, especially when linked with the attacks on the Jews. It proved particularly effective in Germany, given the long tradition of anti-Semitism there and the historical role of the Jews in the evolution of the German nation. An entirely different situation prevailed in Italy, where anti-Semitism played no significant role in the fascist seizure of power or in Mussolini's government. (Even in Germany, as at least one observer† has pointed out, many people became anti-Semitic

because they supported the Nazi program, not the other way around.)

Anti-Semitism serves the same purpose here that it did in Germany. Whether it will be as necessary here will depend, in large part, on the extent to which fascism is tied to one or another wing of capital. To the extent that fascism establishes its independence from the bourgeoisie as a whole, to that extent it is likely that anti-Semitism will diminish in importance within the fascist program, although since it has already developed a life of its own, it may well continue as an ingredient of fascist ideology.

The last two theses deal with the principles that should guide the anti-fascist movement. It is necessary to bear in mind the relation between fascism and official policy. At times the two are complementary, at other times contradictory. Fascism, as has been pointed out, has its roots in official bourgeois race policies. In that sense it is complementary to official policy, reinforces it, etc. But at the same time it contradicts official policy and sets itself up as a genuine opposition and alternative to it. Fascism draws strength from the general direction of official policy, and from the inconsistency, incompleteness and partial character of that policy. That is why it cannot be said that every blow against fascism weakens official bourgeois policy, or that every blow against official bourgeois policy weakens fascism.

An example of this complex relation can be seen in the busing question. When official government policy is openly anti-integration, the fascists gain legitimacy, but at the same time lose some of their distinctiveness. A few years ago, when official government policy was nominally pro-integration, the fascists found it easy to distinguish themselves from the ordinary conservatives, but at the same time were more isolated than they are now. From conservatism to fascism there is both a continuum and a break, and it is necessary to keep both in mind.

STO considers it necessary to oppose both fascism and official government policy, and to do so in such a way that weakening one does not thereby result in strengthening the other. We question whether it is possible to accomplish the end by directing the same tactics against both enemies, or by attempting to wage the struggle against both through the same organizational framework.

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†William Sheridan Alien, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town 1930-35*, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1965.



# Current debates within STO

## Speech given In the Twin Cities, Dec. 12, 1981

by Maryon Gray

I'd like to thank the people at May Day Books for inviting Sojourner Truth Organization to the Twin Cities and for giving us the opportunity to make this presentation tonight.

What I'm going to attempt to do tonight is to acquaint you with some of the debate and discussion now going on within STO. This, I think, is much more difficult than discussing matters about which we already have a worked-out position, but I think it will be worthwhile for two reasons:

1) First, the debates exemplify our approach to critical Marxist thought.

2) Second, I hope the debates will illuminate the dialectical process of the movement of history, as we have been studying it in the dialectics class which we have been teaching here in the Twin Cities.

But before I get into the debates, I'd like to tell you a little about the history of STO. Sojourner Truth Organization was founded in the fall of 1969 by a group of Chicago activists. It had its roots in the Revolutionary Youth Movement II tendency within Students for a Democratic Society. Its initial focus was on point of production organizing within an extra-union context and on community-defense work. As the revolutionary upsurge of the sixties waned, we developed an emphasis on theoretical work and discussion and debate to clarify political line both within the organization and within the left as a whole. In the last three years, we have revitalized our emphasis on mass work — with a new emphasis on issues of social reproduction as well as a new approach to production work.

We are now a small national organization with our main strength still in the Midwest, particularly Chicago and Kansas City.

In terms of political orientation, we look for guidance to the writings of Marx, Lenin, Antonio Gramsci, W. E. B. DuBois, and C. L. R. James.

Central to our politics are our positions on:

1) white skin privilege as the keystone of bourgeois rule in this country;

2) the importance of the struggle of oppressed nations for their liberation as a part of the international proletarian revolution;

3) the theory of the dual consciousness of the working class.

All of these positions are based on an appreciation of basic contradictions *within* the working class. We agree with Lenin when he said in his *Philosophical Notebooks*: "The condition for the knowledge of all the processes of the world in their 'self-movement,' in their spontaneous development, in their real life is the knowledge of them as a unity of opposites. Development is the struggle of opposites."

As Lenin went on to say, it is this conception of historical development as the struggle of opposites which furnishes the key to understanding "the 'self-movement' of everything; it alone furnishes the key to the 'leaps,' to the 'break in continuity,' to the 'transformation into the opposite,' to the destruction of the old and the emergence of the new." We would say, to understanding revolution.

We in STO think that the fundamental contradiction of capitalism is that pointed out by Marx in Chapter I of *Capital*; that is: the two-fold nature of the labor contained in commodities. Labor which produces both use values — products — and exchange value.

For the working class, this dualism manifests itself in the contradiction between the world view of the worker as a wage slave and the world view of the worker as a creative producer, a potential ruler.

For capital, this dualism manifests itself in the contradiction between the ability to produce use values using very little direct human labor and the need to appropriate the exchange value which is created only by direct human labor.

Analysis of this latter contradiction underlies the current debate within STO on the nature of the capitalist crisis.

Like many other groups on the Left, Sojourner Truth Organization is attempting to make an analysis of the current period which will guide us in our work. We are in the midst of a theoretical debate on the nature of capitalism, a debate which has important political consequences.

All of us in STO agree that capital, particularly U.S. capital, is in a period of serious crisis. The disagreement within our organization has been characterized as being whether this crisis is a cyclical crisis or a secular crisis, one which comes only once in an age. I am in the "secular crisis" camp, but I think it is a mistake to narrow the question down to whether the "once in an age" crisis will come in the eighties.

I'd like to take a few minutes to acquaint you with the differing views of political economy which underlie the two positions in this debate, and then I'll discuss their political implications.

Both poles of the debate see the increasing social productivity of labor as the basis of capital's crisis. Competition between capitalists forces them to make each of their workers more productive. This is usually done through giving each worker more machinery to work with. These more productive workers can then make goods more cheaply than the workers whose capitalists are using older methods, and the innovative capitalists can make an extra profit. But this extra profit is only a temporary phenomenon. Once the technical innovations become generalized in an industry, the price of the products tends to fall and profit decreases.

The problem for capital springs from the fact that though both machinery and workers are needed to produce products, use values, only workers create value, and not just value but value over and above their wages. It is this surplus value which is the capitalists' profit. But as the workers become more and more productive, produce more and more use values, the proportion of capital invested in labor power, workers, as compared with the capital invested in machinery, grows ever smaller. And since profit comes only from the surplus value created by the workers, the capitalists' rate of profit falls. This fall in the rate of profit leads to a decrease in capital's ability to accumulate for new investment and thus to a drop in new investment with consequent unemployment.

STO is in basic agreement on this underlying schema. The debate in our organization is whether

and workers will be hired in even greater numbers than previously.

To put it briefly, this view sees the constant tendency of capitalism being to expand — to reproduce capitalist relations of production on an ever-wider scale, absorbing an ever-growing percentage of the world's people into these capitalist relations of production. This expansion is punctuated by cycles of boom and bust. But until it is stopped by the socialist revolution, each crisis will be followed by another period of expansion.

What are the political implications of this view? This view states that because the tendency of capitalism is to expand capitalist relations of production on a world scale, the international class struggle will become increasingly one of the proletariat versus the capitalists. Other divisions of the world's peoples, such as that between oppressed nations and oppressor nations, will become less important.

What does the other pole — the notion of the crisis of the law of value — say on this question? It argues that as capital develops, the class struggle will become increasingly a national struggle.

Why is this so? Because as capital develops, it approaches its own inner limit of development. It is increasingly unable to incorporate new sectors of the world's population into itself, and even casts out sectors previously incorporated, such as oppressed-nation workers within the advanced capitalist nations. Because these marginalized workers are excluded from the productive process, their struggles increasingly focus on needs of their nation as a whole, such as housing, utilities, health care. They come to see themselves more clearly as members of an oppressed

## crisis of the law of value?

this development of the social productivity of labor results simply in a crisis for capital of a falling rate of profit or whether it results in a more fundamental crisis of the functioning of the law of value itself.

Those who see the crisis as being one of the falling rate of profit argue that, leaving aside for the moment the question of socialist revolution, capital can overcome the crisis through depression and devaluation of capital, through searching out cheaper labor power, and through opening up new industries with a lower organic composition of capital.

This capitalist reindustrialization will require sharp breaks in routine and acute struggle against the working class — but when it is completed, capital will begin a new cycle of accumulation and expansion,

nation as the material differential between oppressed-nation workers and oppressor-nation workers becomes more acute.

What is the basis in political economy for this perspective? This view focuses on the contradiction within capital between the workers as a creative producer of use values and the worker as a wage slave who produces surplus value for the capitalist. The capitalist system is based on the appropriation of this surplus value. It needs it to expand and even to survive. But as the general creative capacity of society in the form of science and technology becomes ever and ever more incorporated into the productive process, labor in the direct form becomes less important in the production of use values. Yet capital needs the sur-

plus value created by direct labor in order to function in its normal fashion. This contradiction brings a crisis for capital which will be increasingly difficult for it to resolve by the familiar pattern of boom and bust. The capitalist world system becomes more chaotic. Unemployment becomes increasingly the norm rather than the exception. Large sectors of the workforce will be marginalized, permanently unemployed or only sporadically employed. Within the advanced capitalist countries, these marginalized sectors will be the people of color. And as I said before, these marginalized sectors will come increasingly to identify with the national aspect of their class position.

All of us in STO, whether we see the current crisis of capital as a cyclical crisis or a secular crisis, see new difficulties for the class struggle in the present period. The increasingly disproportionate unemployment of people of color — whether it be temporary or permanent — leads to increased divisions within the working class. The division between white workers and workers of color is no longer one of relative advantages for white people, but increasingly a division between those who can work and those who can't work at all. This makes the fight for equality more difficult. We all agree that this fight must continue but those who see the crisis marginalizing workers of the oppressed nations see new potentials for struggle around issues of social reproduction.

The increased divisions within the working class brought by the capitalist crisis poses another threat to the worker's struggle — that of FASCISM.

Up until our general membership meeting in April of this year, STO had held the position that fascism was not currently a threat in the United States. Our position stood in contrast to that of most sections of the New Left who applied the term fascism to every instance of state repression.

Our position was based largely on our analysis of how the bourgeoisie maintains its rule in this country. Bourgeois rule is based on a system of white skin privileges — relative advantages in political, economic, and social conditions available to all white people, including white workers — solely because of the color of their skins. These relative advantages, along with white racist ideology, provide the basis for white workers' subordination of their class interest to racial and national group interest. Bourgeois rule is maintained through the acquiescence of whites, who identify more with their own bourgeoisie than with their fellow workers of color, and through the repression of the struggle of peoples of color.

However, we see that our previous analysis is no longer adequate in two respects.

1) First, in relationship to the working class, we

see that once the bourgeoisie has normalized its rule based upon white supremacy, the ideology develops a life of its own, and fascist groups such as the Klan and Nazis are far better situated to mobilize masses to fight for that ideology in an uncompromising fashion. The potential for such a mobilization grows out of an economic crisis in which capital is no longer able to satisfy the needs and aspirations of even the white workers and petty bourgeoisie — and out of a social crisis that has led to a rapid decline in popular loyalty to traditional institutions.

A popular vision of a revolutionary way out of the crisis can mobilize sectors of the population who have been dislocated by the capitalist crisis and alienated from the traditional bourgeois institutions of conciliation. Both communist and fascist visions of such a revolutionary alternative exist in this country today. But given the strength of white supremacist ideology and the weakness of the left in this country, it is the fascist vision which is most obviously on the upsurge.

2) And this totalitarian fascist vision is attractive to sectors of the bourgeoisie. The failure to understand this attraction of the bourgeoisie to the fascist alternative was the second weakness of STO's previous analysis.

We still maintain that bourgeois democracy supported by a system of white skin privileges is the bourgeoisie's favored form of rule. However, the current economic crisis calls into question the bourgeoisie's ability to maintain its rule on that basis. A fascist totalitarian state becomes a possible alternative both as a means of social control and as a means of exploitation, of extraction of surplus value.

However, to say that sectors of the bourgeoisie are attracted to the fascist alternative is not to say that the fascist movements are a tool of the capitalist class, or even that the interests of the bourgeoisie and the fascists are the same. One of the distinguishing features of fascism is its autonomous, mass, revolutionary character which poses a threat to the very bourgeois forces who may support it.

Thus, the relationship between the fascist movement and various sectors of the bourgeoisie and the state is varied, complex and contradictory. STO maintains that the U.S. left has viewed this relationship much too simplistically.

Some sectors, such as those involved in the National Anti-Klan Network, have downplayed the connections between the fascist movements and the state, even to the point of seeking to use the state to fight the Klan through lawsuits and Congressional investigations.

Other sectors, such as the Communist Workers Party and the anti-Klan coalition which it initiated,

People United, make the opposite error. They see the Klan and the Nazis simply as tools of the bourgeois state. This leads them to tie anti-fascist work and anti-repression work together in a way which continually focuses on the state.

STO works within both of these anti-Klan coalitions. In that work we have argued that it is important to see the distinction between state repression and fascism so that a strategy can be developed which adequately fights both institutionalized white supremacy and state repression, and the growing fascist movements.

However, a new question has arisen within STO about the possibility for developing one strategy which will do both. We are currently discussing the proposition that the struggle against fascism and the struggle against institutionalized white supremacy and state repression *may* be contradictory rather than complementary.

The fascist strategy on race is not in a continuum

## **a defeat for state racism will not of itself represent the defeat of fascism**

with the white supremacy of the state but is an alternative to it. This suggests that a defeat for state racism will not of itself represent the defeat of fascism; on the contrary, the failure of the state's racist strategy will make the threat to Blacks from the fascists themselves even more acute. Conversely, it is also clear that to defeat the Klan or the Nazis will hardly dent the racist apparatus of the state itself. Thus the struggle against both forms of white supremacy is made more urgent by an understanding of the differences between them.

All these questions about the relationship between the fascist movements and the bourgeoisie have a direct bearing on how we do anti-fascist and anti-racist work. But we are certainly not awaiting the resolution of these questions before we start our work. Thus we have also been discussing more specific questions of strategy and tactics for the work.

One question is that of the role of united front work. STO is a member of all three national anti-Klan coalitions. We see such national coalitions as essential to the fight against fascism. Yet we see that the existing coalitions must be transformed before they can be effective in this fight.

Therefore, we have decided that united front and left coalition work cannot be the totality of our antifascist work. We must begin our own anti-fascist organizing projects — directly confronting the fascists in

the communities and schools where they are now organizing. Hopefully such local mass work will provide a model for national work of the anti-Klan coalitions.

In our STO discussion of united front work, we have also begun to develop a critique of Line of March's proposal for a United Front Against War and Racism. A portion of that critique is relevant to the general question of united front work.

Line of March assumes that unity of the class will follow from unity of the left and left social democrats. We say that unity of the class will flow from the class's own experiences in struggle. This is particularly true in the U.S. today, where left organizations have very little influence within the working class. Left coalition work is important, but we must also be working to develop forms of organization and struggle in which the working class can participate now to gain unity and a sense of its own strength.

I have focused in the presentation on the capitalist crisis and the struggle against fascism because current discussion and debate in STO have focused on these areas. But our political work is by no means confined to them.

To give you a more complete view of STO, I'd like to speak briefly about some other areas of our current work:

- support for national liberation struggles
- the anti-nuke movement
- the women's movement
- the revolutionary left tendency.

STO sees struggles of oppressed nations for their liberation from imperialism as an integral part of the proletarian revolution. At our last general membership meeting we re-affirmed our position that "nationalism of oppressed peoples, manifested in revolutionary anti-imperialist struggles for national liberation, is the most widespread and visible example of 'applied internationalism' in the world today."

Within the borders of the United States we see the Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican and Native American movements as a part of this struggle of oppressed nations against imperialism.

We have implemented this position through support for these movements and through work in the anti-war movement.

We see this work as of growing importance in the

present period. As I mentioned earlier, some in STO think that the struggle against capital in this country will take place in increasingly national forms as large sectors of oppressed-nation workers are marginalized from the workforce.

Internationally, support for national liberation struggles and anti-war work in this country become more urgent as the imperialist war machine flexes its muscles.

But history has shown us that the worldwide socialist revolution does not proceed according to a domino theory, with one nation after another entering the socialist camp. The current events in such diverse countries as China and Zimbabwe point out the vast difficulty of nations being able to remove themselves sufficiently from the imperialist world system to move down the path of socialism.

The international proletarian revolution is- not a linear struggle but a series of breaks and leaps and counter-revolutions. Struggles of the proletariat in the advanced industrial nations are crucial for the ultimate victory of socialism and at times come to the foreground of the international proletarian revolution:

France in 1968

Italy in 1969

Poland today. . . .

Since I know that the Twin Cities is an important center for anti-nuclear work, I just want to mention that STO is active in the anti-nuclear movement. In that work we stress the need to fight against the entire nuclear cycle. Particularly we work with sectors of the anti-nuke movement who support the struggles of Native people to protect their lands from exploitation and appropriation for nuclear mining and dumping. We also seek to constantly make the connection between nuclear power and nuclear weapons. Third, we stress the need for militancy and look to the struggles of Native peoples and farmers as a guide for militant action.

STO is also active in the women's movement, particularly in the Reproductive Rights National Network and in local anti-militarist/anti-nuclear women's groups which we see as part of an emerging anti-imperialist sector of the women's movement.

The women's movement is currently addressing many important and exciting questions about its orientation and direction.

In the 1960s we had the women's liberation movement which directly grew out of the Black liberation movement. Women fought for control over our own lives by addressing a broad spectrum of issues — abortion rights with no forced sterilization, job opportunities, child care, new social relations between men and women, affirmation of the lesbian alternative.

In the 1970s the women's movement turned inward, becoming the "women's community."

Now in the eighties the militant women's movement has re-emerged with an increased awareness that a mass, militant women's movement is necessary to protect our hard-won gains. Even more important, a significant sector of the women's movement is saying that the fight against racism, national oppression and imperialism must become a part of the women's movement — that it is not sufficient that as individuals we may be anti-racist or anti-imperialist, but that the women's movement must say up front that we cannot be free as women until all people are free.

Practically this means seeking out alliance with third world groups of both women and men and working on issues which they view as the most crucial. Theoretically, this means studying the history of racism in the women's movement and the relationship between patriarchy and imperialism.

But, of course, there are many other trends in the women's movement. One which we think it is particularly important to fight *against* is the movement to the right by many of the Marxist-Leninists who work in the women's movement. This move to the right shows itself in an emphasis on legislative work and building coalitions with social democratic forces and an insufficient emphasis on building a strong, autonomous, militant women's movement.

The rightward drift of the left is apparent in many places besides the women's movement. STO feels that at this time it is important to counter this drift to the right by coalescing a revolutionary left tendency within the communist movement. We think that such a tendency exists but generally in the form of small isolated groups or individuals. We hope that in this period, revolutionary leftists can begin to work together in the mass movements. In an effort to aid this process, we have taken two steps which we hope will help facilitate communication and discussion between groups and individuals in the revolutionary left.

First, we have begun to put out a newsletter in which people can exchange information about their work, their organizations and political perspectives and hopefully discuss questions of common interest. Copies of the first issue of this newsletter are available on our literature table.

We have also begun to speak to other groups and individuals about jointly sponsoring a conference to discuss the current period — the nature of the capitalist crisis, the mass movements and the tasks of the left. We'll be distributing information about that conference here in the Twin Cities and hope that you will be interested in attending.

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# Speeches to the National Anti-Klan Network Conference, Atlanta, June 19, 1982

## THE INTERNATIONAL FACE OF FASCISM

by David Edgar

Let me start by saying how happy I am to be here, how honored I am to be invited and to bring greetings of *Searchlight* magazine, of the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, and the whole British anti-racist movement to you here today. I'd like to add to that how envious I am of your success in organizing this conference.

I say that because despite the considerable successes of the anti-fascist and anti-racist movement in Britain which I will talk about later, at the present that movement is fractured and uncertain in this particularly alarming time when last summer's riots in British cities combined with the military success of the Falklands venture to create a milieu of national chauvinism edging close to racism which I believe to be extremely dangerous to Black and Asian people in Britain, and I'll go into that more later.

But I was asked to talk about the international face of fascism with particular reference to the British National Front. I suppose it would be helpful to talk about European fascist groups as well and if I can fit it in as well, mention a little about the American fascist right, and that in France and all of this first thing on a Saturday morning in a short session shared with another very distinguished speaker.

I'm reminded of the story of a judge who's sentencing a criminal who committed a vast series of crimes, and he told the man his various sentences would add up to a total of nine hundred years. And the criminal said, "I'm terribly sorry, your honor, I can't possibly do all that." And the judge leaned down rather benignly and sympathetically and said, "I know, but try and do as much as you can."

So I'll try and do as much as I can, but I think I'd better start by giving a short summary of the history of British fascism in the post-Second World War period, a history so absurdly potted I'll probably give the impression I've been smoking it.

The central project of the National Socialist, the Nazi right in Britain since the war, has been the seemingly impossible one of making Nazi ideas popular in a country which fought longer than any other against German fascism in the forties. The method by which

British Nazis attempted to gain support for this ideology has twisted and turned over the years, but until very recently the basic strategy was that summed up in a secret letter written in 1967 by leading British fascist John Tyndall to a man you may know, the American Nazi William Pierce.

Tyndall's letter made it clear that there was in his view no way that an openly Nazi movement with jack-boots and swastikas could succeed in Britain. Tactics would have to be covert, therefore. Supporters would have to be recruited to seemingly respectable front organizations on the basis of single issues, and only then gradually indoctrinated into a comprehensively Nazi view.

The main issue on which the British Nazis sought to recruit was and is, of course, Black and Asian immigration to Britain, which began in the 1950s, encouraged, I may say, by the then Conservative government, keen to recruit low-paid labor and which peaked in the early- to mid-seventies.

The utility of the race question for the fascists went beyond the exploitation of simple racial hostility; immigration connected neatly to other issues.

The first was the decline and fall of the British Empire, viewed by the fascists as a deliberate act of national suicide inspired by liberal intelligentsia, of which the presence of the former colonial peoples in the mother country from the Indian sub-continent and Caribbean was a mocking reminder.

But even more important, the fascists were still totally committed to the anti-Semitic conspiracy theory of history and were able to blame both the end of the empire and Black immigration on the deliberate, secret plot by international Jews to destroy the British race — a plot masterminded by Wall Street and super-rich Jewish bankers who are also involved in the United Nations, NATO, IMF, Common Market, and indeed, the Communist Bloc. It was and is, as you know, a central tenet of Nazism that New York Jewish bankers directly financed, promoted, and organized the Russian revolution.

As I said, however, the central strategy of recruiting support on the basis of simple, primitive racism, and only then indoctrinating these supporters into the full Nazi ideology, went through a number of

variations. First, in the 1950s British fascists were largely organized in a strangely old-world, upper-class Conservative Party pressure group called the League of Empire Loyalists.

By the early sixties, however, racial tension in Britain had mounted sufficiently for the Young Turks of the League of Empire Loyalists to break away to form something a bit bolder which would be openly named National Socialist Movement, founded on the anniversary of Hitler's birthday in 1962 at a party whose high point was a trans-Atlantic telephone call to your own late Lincoln Rockwell, who obviously wasn't late at the time and indeed in the summer of the same year came over to Britain to co-found with the British Nazi movement the grandiosely named World Union of National Socialists which, of course, still exists today.

But it soon became clear that an openly Nazi movement in Britain was a non-starter. At first it was laughed at, and many of its leaders were arrested and jailed for organizing a private army. By the end of the sixties, the time of the letter to William Pierce, the main line of strategy was formulated and the British National Front was established as a pseudo-respectable liberal electoral front organization which campaigned publicly on the issue of Black immigration and only privately to develop Nazi ideas.

As if to confirm the potential of this strategy, in April 1968 the Conservative Party's defense spokesman, Enoch Powell, made a famous anti-immigration speech named "The Rivers of Blood" speech, by far the most extreme racist speech to be

made by a leading British politician. The reaction in the opinion polls and in elections made clear to the Nazis and National Front how potent this issue could be.

Throughout the seventies, then, the National Front concentrated on building up its organization, recruiting favors and supporters and fighting national labor elections. Gradually its votes grew in fits and starts from a derisory two or three percent towards ten percent in some areas and as high as fifteen or twenty percent in its most solid districts of working-class neighborhoods in large cities in which Black immigration had been proportionally the highest.

By 1976 the National Front was calling itself Britain's third party on the basis of having defeated the Liberal Party, which has been traditionally regarded as Britain's third party, on a number of occasions. A general election happened to be called sometime in 1979. It seemed clear that the National Front had the potential to achieve, even if it didn't get anyone elected, a significant proportion of the votes and a permanent presence on the British political scene.

Well, it didn't actually happen. In May 1979, at the general election which returned the Thatcher government, the National Front put up candidates in half the parliamentary districts who averaged 633 votes each, just over three percent of the votes in the districts where they stood. Even in their heartlands of support, the vote declined dramatically.

There are many reasons for this decline but the main one, in my view, was the quite extraordinary



mass movement of the opposition to them which successfully exposed their strategy. It made clear through inventive and widespread propaganda that the leaders of the National Front were and always had been dedicated National Socialists and that their commitment to the electoral process was as shallow and hypocritical as Hitler's had been in Germany in the 1930s.

I want to develop that point but first talk a little about how the NF responded to the catastrophe of the '79 elections.

After a series of bruising internal conflicts, the Party had split into four warring factions within a year. The new line had emerged in an internal members-only bulletin dated July 1980, a document which somehow or other happened to fall into our hands. The key passage was, in the bulletin, as follows:

If it is true that the National Front has no hope of gaining power under conditions of stability, economically, socially, or politically, we should not be preoccupied with making ourselves more respectable under present conditions. We must appreciate that the image we have been given by the media, which may well lose us some potential support today, will be a positive asset when the streets are beset by riots, unemployment soars, and when inflation gets even beyond the present degree of minimal control.

Clearly, it is a small step from that argument that the National Front today is growing in conditions of social unrest to the conclusion that the National Front should be busily engaged in bringing that social unrest about. Three things very quickly started to happen that continue to happen until the present day.

The first was that in the National Front's propaganda (in saying National Front, I also mean the various parties that split from it), all pretenses of not being a Nazi organization were discarded. Open anti-Semitism ruled in the propaganda. Classic anti-Semitic texts like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* appeared in the booklets and were quoted approvingly. The phrase "National Socialist" was used with pride. In its propaganda, then, the Nazi right stood proudly unveiled as just that.

The second development was an open espousal of racial violence. Since 1979 there has, in England, been a growing epidemic of organized racial attacks on Black and Asian people in their homes and on the streets which has now a level, according to the British Indian Workers Association, of 1,000 separate racial attacks a month.

Organized bands of skin-heads, which is a white working-class youth subculture, are openly proclaiming their affiliation with the National Front or its off-shoots. They're terrorizing individuals and families in racially mixed areas. Weapons have been found on National Front premises and plans to buy or import further arms have been revealed. In its public



persona, then, the National Front has changed from a pseudo-respectable disciplined group of campaigners to a disorderly, overwhelmingly young, rabble of thugs devoted to Nazi regalia and indiscriminate street violence.

Behind the scenes, however, an even more sinister development was taking place.

The British fascist movement had from the sixties cultivated international links, particularly with American organizations like the Nazi Party itself but also specifically the National States Rights Party of J. B. Stoner and Edward Fields, both of whom visited Britain frequently during the mid-to-late seventies, addressing National Front meetings.

National Front leader John Tyndall twice returned the visits, speaking indeed here in Georgia during the same period. Tyndall was described glowingly by the *Thunderbolt* as the dynamic orator whose message of white race survival has inspired a nation. Edward Fields described one of his visits to Britain in the *Thunderbolt* of July 1977 as follows:

The thundering cheers from the throng. . . . I told the patriots that the Jews are the common enemy of all white nations in Europe. I explained that the developing European Parliament posed a grave threat to the liberty and freedom of all European nations. I also warned that the colored immigration of foreign workers threatened to pollute and destroy all the white countries in Europe.

In addition, both David Duke and Bill Wilkinson visited Britain too, again in the late seventies, and held secret meetings with the National Front and other fascist groups. But the key organization with international linkage was, in fact, not the National Front itself, but a shadowy British body called the League of St. George — St. George being Britain's



patron saint — which has never made any secret of its Nazi affiliations, which has many members who are also members of larger, public extreme-right groups.

In 1975 Edwards Fields' visit to Britain was hosted by the League, and in 1977 we were able to reveal that the League's international officer, also a National Front member, was the international representative of the journal *Christian Vanguard*, the violently anti-Semitic paper of James K. Waller's New Christian Crusade Church, who was formerly David Duke's number two. In the summary of the American extreme right in October 1977, the League of St. George's journal listed the NSWPP (National Socialist White People's Party), the Duke Klan, the NSRP, and the New Christian Crusade Church as the leadership that would save white America from the effects of darkness.

But the League has not restricted its international activities to the States. Most of Edward Fields' and Stoner's visits to Britain have been either en route to or from an annual Nazi jamboree — which is held in Diksmuide, Belgium, ostensibly to commemorate the Belgian war dead but in fact to celebrate the memory of Hitler's SS — which provides, when the police allow it to happen, a forum for the international Nazi movement to plan its strategy.

In July 1980 at Diksmuide, a secret meeting was held of top European Nazis, including representatives of the British League of St. George, with top American Nazis. Sadly, we weren't invited, so we can't confirm quite who was there, but it is almost certain that one of them was from the NSRP. A number of schemes were discussed including the export of guns from America to Europe and a plan to spring J. B. Stoner from jail.

The next month 82 people died in the Nazi bombing at the railway station in Bologna in North Italy, the worst terrorist outrage of the post-war period. A month after that, 14 people died in another Nazi bombing in Munich, Germany, and a month after that, French fascists bombed the rue Copernic synagogue in Paris.

We have established since that in all cases the bombers or their close associates have had intimate connections with the British Nazi right, particularly through the League of St. George and, in the case of the Italian group responsible for Bologna, several members have been provided sanctuary in Britain by League of St. George members. Indeed, the same service was provided for members of the Turkish Grey Wolves, the group responsible for the attempted assassination of the Pope, a couple of years ago.

It is clear beyond doubt that the British extreme right has performed a key support role for the growing European fascist international by providing safe houses and the like. There is mounting evidence of British arms stockpiling, indicating that fascist terrorism on the model of Bologna, Munich, and Paris

could be being planned in Britain.

The picture I've built up is one, then, of a now overt Nazi movement which has spurned the road of gaining popular support in elections in favor of street violence and intimidation. In other words, I'm talking about the significant and unpleasant and dangerous, but nonetheless in many ways marginal, group that has been forced into marginality by successful anti-racist campaigns.

I know that you've had the same kind of argument here that we've had in Britain as to whether the racists on the streets are maybe unofficial arms of the racist state, as to whether indeed the state was already fascist and that the activities of actual proclaimed fascists was no more than guarding the bolted stable door. The situation of the National Front in the aftermath of '79 seemed finally to prove, if proof is necessary, that practically, politically, and sociologically the fascist right was an exclusive, excluded phenomenon, that it had to be considered and fought separately from the racist machine of the state.

I still think this is broadly the case. And yet, over the last twelve months or so, more precisely since riots broke out in Brixton and London in April 1981 and particularly since further riots broke out in the summer in Liverpool and Manchester, there has been a strange and alarming change in British politics which results partly from the manifest failure of Thatchernomics — we got that first — with growth in the Conservative Party of a kind of right-wing authoritarianism which has hitherto been confined to the tiniest and craziest of the Party's fringes.

The components of this authoritarianism will be familiar to you. A critique of social explanations of crime, the scapegoating of Blacks as a criminal class, calls for tough law-and-order measures, militant anti-feminism, calls for reassertion of traditional sexual, family, and educational values, and militarism. But what's been particularly striking is the way the idea of nationhood and national pride is increasingly expressed by the idea of race and racial pride, which have been common factors in comments first on the riots and then on the Falklands venture.

As it were, the British people, the white British people, have stood up against the alien enemy without and reasserted their national pride and identity. Now one can draw the implication that they might well consider standing up against the enemy within, the alien hordes that, so runs the rhetoric, were admitted by the liberal elite against the wishes of the vast majority of the British people — the rhetoric of a once-great nation, buffeted by the liberal intelligentsia but finally reasserting its own tenets on racial community that were already familiar to us from the writings of our fascist right and are familiar to you from the writings of your fascist right and are certainly familiar to anyone who has read anything about the propaganda of the German Nazi Party in the '20s

and '30s.

This does not mean that the Conservative Party is developing a fascist wing, although there have been significant organizational links forged between right-wing conservatives and those older British fascists alarmed by the lumpen thuggery of the present fascist movement. What it does mean is hierarchical, elitist, and authoritarian ideas, ideas with inherent racial differences between nations, and inherent differences in intelligence, talent, and competence within nations, biological determinist ideas, in other words, are becoming at least slowly but surely part of the common sense of the age.

You can see it in the growth of the French New Right, which argues for the inevitable genetic differences between and within peoples. You can see it in the increased popularity of the pseudo-science of socio-biology, an American phenomenon. As Anne Braden, I think, hinted yesterday, you can see it also in a rather different form in the ideology of your own neo-conservatives, whose lurch to the right began, you will recall, with the repealing of the Black gains of the 1960s and indeed the general democratic gains of the sixties which had gone "much too far" and that what America needed was a reassertion of tradition and authority.

None of this, let me repeat, is to say that National Socialist ideas are rife within the conservative movement on either side of the Atlantic. There is, however, one increasingly respectable movement which is National Socialist, is growing, and is dangerous, which is the campaign to revise the history of the Second World War to deny the Nazi Holocaust of the Jews.

As I'm sure most of you know, this campaign was the province of the tiniest of fascist fringes until Arthur Butz of Northwestern University in Chicago produced a book called *Hoax of the Twentieth Century* which quickly shot to the top of the Nazi bestseller lists, to be followed by a number of well-produced, well-financed glossy pamphlets and books exploring the same theme, one of which was written by William Grimstad, a former editor of *White Power* and more recently an employee of David Duke.

Between those two pressing engagements it is almost certain that Grimstad recruited the director of the Institute of Historical Review, a Liberty Lobby front which began holding prestigious pseudo-academic conferences on what they call the "Holocaust myth" in California in 1979. The director of the institute, although he called himself Lewis Brandon, was in fact a British fascist called Dave McCalden who left the National Front during internal squabbles in the mid-seventies.

The purpose of the "revisionist" campaign, as it's called, was made crystal clear by Brandon/McCalden in an interview with *Los Angeles* magazine when he stated,



It is ideologically useful to show that the whole concept of an ethnic political campaign is not the big bogey man it is generally thought to be. If you say anything about Blacks or Jews, they say you want another Holocaust. If we can take the Holocaust propaganda and put it away, then there will be an open, frank, and true discussion on ethnic matters.

In other words, the racists and fascists want to deny their most notorious historical crime for the express purpose of reviving their gruesome ideology. It is my view, therefore, that in the British context (and I am not, I hope, arrogant enough to apply those confusions to your context — I have come here to learn about that) the fight against racism and fascism can no longer be compartmentalized, because racist, elitist ideas themselves have, since the late seventies, infiltrated and informed all kinds of other issues from law and order to the family, from education to foreign policy.

I am firmly convinced that the Conservative Party, its economic policy in ruins, will go to the electorate sometime next year on a social authoritarian platform which will combine evocations of the Falk-lands victory with a much tougher line on law and order, the repeal of equal rights legislation for Blacks and women, and probably some scheme of so-called voluntary repatriation for Britain's Black population.

The task for British anti-racists, therefore, is to

take a program and platform of anti-racism from the anti-racist committees into the Labour Party, into the trade unions, into the women's and gay movements, and into the peace movement to see to it that opposition to racist attacks from fascists and the state is as central a plank in the next electoral contest as disarmament and economic strategy.

I shouldn't finish, however, and I must finish soon, without saying a word or two about the antifascist mass movement of the late 1970s, which was single-issue, which was compartmentalized, because, although I no longer think its politics are appropriate, they were extraordinarily appropriate at the time, and I think we can still learn from them.

In 1976 the National Front vote was increasing alarmingly. It mounted a successful campaign to recruit unemployed white youth, and it appeared that within that subculture there was a danger that the exposure of the National Front as a Nazi front in our magazine *Searchlight*, indeed, and elsewhere, was not getting through to the wider public.

A British left political party, the Socialist Workers Party, in a remarkable initiative set up an organization called the Anti-Nazi League in order, first, to unite liberal and left opinion around the slogans of anti-fascism, to combat the prevalent view that the National Front was an insignificant organization and if it was ignored it would wither away.

The second concept with which I gather you are familiar gave wide publicity to the Nazi nature of the National Front and further provided an alternative organizational focus for the energies of disenchanted and alienated white youth facing increased unemployment and social decay in the inner cities.

On the first, the Anti-Nazi League produced a statement of opposition to the growth of neo-fascism which was signed by an impressive number of academics, journalists, church leaders, writers, actors, sports personalities, and politicians. It managed in meetings and other propaganda activities to unite not only a surprisingly wide spectrum of left groups (I say surprising because sectarianism is as un-strange to us as it is to you) with branches of the Labour and Liberal parties and representatives of the churches.

Even more important, I think, it brought together in special conferences groups of people, notably journalists and teachers, but others as well, to discuss in a highly detailed and non-rhetorical way how to combat racism in day-to-day life, on the grounds, in the newsroom, in the classroom, very much in the manner and spirit of the conference you all are holding here.

On the second question, the League produced extremely professional propaganda in the form of leaflets, posters, buttons, t-shirts, and so on which hammered the message that the National Front was indeed a Nazi front and gave chapter and verse on the openly Nazi pasts of the National Front leaders. I

should say in passing that for the first time a British left campaign managed successfully to employ the kind of high-quality, well-thought-out marketing techniques that you people developed many years ago.

On the third question, the League conceived the idea, and I think it was actually thought up in someone's bath, of holding not quite a demonstration and not quite a rally and not yet quite a rock festival but a bit of all three, which ended up being called a carnival and was held in April 1978, that brought together the predictable left groups but also an extraordinary number of Black and white working-class kids who marched together through London to a free rock concert. They symbolized to the country and, even more important, I think, to themselves, that Black and white youth were united by more than they were separated by, but that anti-racism could be as much fun, indeed more fun than racism. Indeed, one of my favorite slogans from that whole campaign was "Nazis are no fun."

I am convinced that the Anti-Nazi League and its

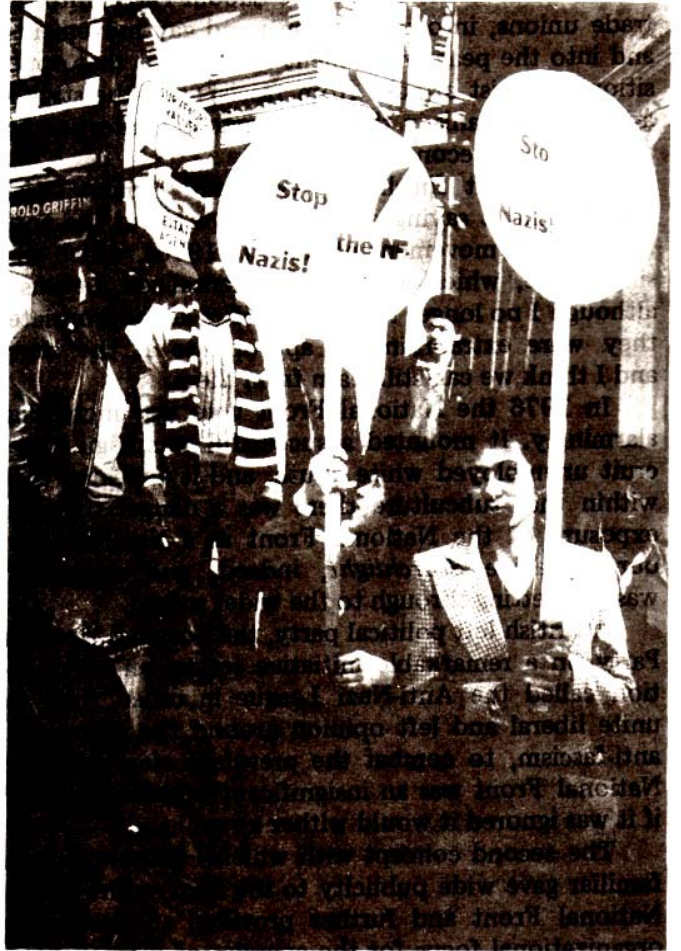


carnival achieved three major successes. One was to convince the country that the National Front was really a fascist organization. Second, to pare down the National Front vote to the absolute hard core of its racist supporters in the general election. And third, it prevented, if only for a while, the Nazis from making significant inroads into working-class white youth.

I think the campaign ran out of steam, that the attitudes of the organization which founded it were perhaps rather over-hastily transferred elsewhere. There is an urgent need for a new initiative on the lines that I described a few moments ago. And I think it's good for us all to remember successes as we remembered the success in Chattanooga a moment ago. And I think the Anti-Nazi League carnival was a peculiar, symbolic one.

I mentioned that the British National Socialist movement was founded on Hitler's birthday, April 20, 1962. I think I forgot to mention that by strange coincidence Enoch Powell's notorious anti-immigration "Rivers of Blood" speech of 1968 was also made on that highly evocative date. It was thus peculiarly appropriate that again, as it happens by complete coincidence, that the Anti-Nazi League carnival should be held on the 30th of April 1970, because that's the anniversary of the death of Adolf Hitler in his bunker. [Applause]

That was, of course, appropriate because the message of that carnival, as the message of this conference, was and is that Adolf Hitler and Adolf Hitlerism should stay that way.



## A VICTORY IN CHATTANOOGA AND A CHALLENGE TO WHITE ORGANIZERS

by **Randolph Scott-McLaughlin**

Good morning. Before I begin to discuss the legal case of Chattanooga, I'd like to give you a little background on how the case began and the type of law we used to win that case. As many of you know and some of you may not know, the National Anti-Klan Network had its beginnings back in May of 1979 when a Klan group in Decatur, Alabama, decided that Blacks were not going to march in that city any longer, and viciously, violently, openly and in broad daylight, with police assistance, shot into and attacked a peaceful SCLC demonstration protesting the jailing of a young black man named Tommy Lee Hines.

A call was sent out by SCLC for organizers and those concerned about human rights to come to De-

catuur, and to show the Klan that this was not 1879, it was 1979. A month later some two to three thousand individuals came from across the South and the North and we determined that it was time to not respond to the Klan in an ad hoc fashion, that that was very dangerous; it was time for us to plan an organized, consistent response combining a variety of techniques. The technique that I became involved in was the legal technique.

Now, some may say, "What role can a lawyer play in the anti-Klan movement?" We did feel we did have a role to play, and toward that end we organized a legal task force of some one hundred lawyers from across the nation who were interested in this type of work and helped to form certain strategies. The lawyers for the anti-Klan movement, as we indicated

earlier assisted in the February 2 Greensboro mobilization of 1980, filing lawsuits on behalf of demonstrators. In other cases we assisted when anti-Klan activists had been arrested and charged with criminal violations because they had defended themselves against Klan terrorists.

Let's make no mistake about it: there's all this talk about "terrorism" and currently I'm defending two men in New York who are 'accused of being terrorists, but the real terrorists are those who have state power and use it to inflict terror on others and those who don't have state power and use the power they have to inflict terror on the masses of Black people. We have to use that word "terrorist" in its proper context. [Applause]

And finally we decided in the anti-Klan movement that there was another place that we needed to provide with legal support, and that was the area of victims of Klan violence. Toward that end we researched some of the early laws and found that, indeed, there were laws on the books as early as the 1870s designed specifically to deal with the problem of Klan violence.

The Klan first reared its ugly head in the state of Tennessee in a city called Pulaski. It was formed by a man named Nathan Bedford Forrest, who was an old Confederate general. Reconstruction was an interesting period in American history, especially for Black Americans, inasmuch as it was the first time — and probably the last time until the 1960s — that we were actually accorded the equal protection of the law, and laws were enacted to benefit our people as human beings and citizens. We ran Southern governments, we established the first public school system in the South, we had more Blacks in the halls of Congress than we have today, we ran the state legislatures of South Carolina and Mississippi, two states that were long steeped in the oppression of Black people. Yes, we ran those states.

The general and the Southern Confederates could not let this pass them by as they slept in their sheets and decided it was time for them to organize another response, which was to put on white robes, dressing in the dead of night, and riding with shotguns at their sides they bludgeoned Black people back into slavery. They whipped, castrated, mutilated, bombed churches, oppressed black people, and tried to intimidate, if not kill them, to prevent them from exercising the rights they had recently won. Congress, which was controlled at that time by people called the Radical Republicans — I guess they were radical for their time, but they never brought that forty acres and a mule which we're still waiting for — nevertheless they passed laws which were designed to benefit us, and those laws were collectively called the Ku Klux Klan Acts.

The first law prohibited conspiracies aimed at violating Black people's civil rights. If you have a

Klan group, and they're conspiring, which they always do — "conspiring" is a very simple word; it means a meeting of the minds, and discussion, and agreement — if they conspire to do certain things for the purpose of violating civil rights, you have the right to file a lawsuit to prevent that action or to seek monetary relief — damages, dollars — if they carry out their evil deeds.

Another statute, again passed during that time, is just as important. That statute says that if I know of a conspiracy involving a violation of civil rights and I don't do anything to stop it, I'm just as liable — even if I went home and slept in my bed that night while the Klansmen went downtown to burn crosses — as an aider and abettor, if I did nothing to stop it. And finally, there was a statute passed which was essentially designed to get at state officials, like sheriffs in Wrightsville, Georgia, who assist Klansmen and others in the violation of civil rights.

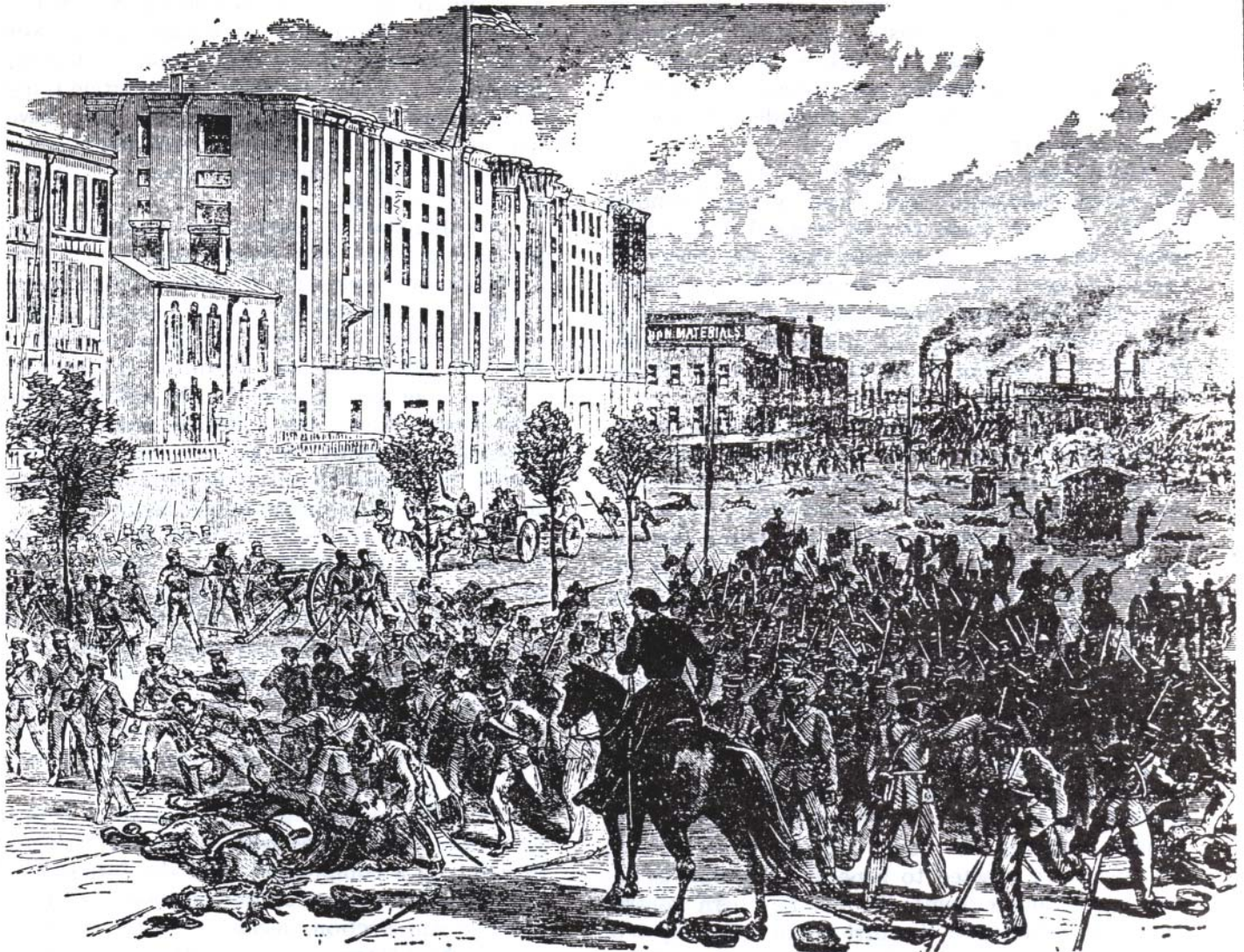
Well, those are very nice laws, and they were on the books in the 1870s, but any good lawyer will tell you that a law is meaningless unless it's being used. And any good lawyer will also tell you that if the courts are controlled by ex-Confederates as they were in the 1870s, there are very few victories you will win through the law. During that time, Blacks were not permitted to practice the law, and I would say that unless you have your own people protecting you, very likely you will not be protected.

In 1876 something very interesting happened. Two men ran for president, Hayes and Tilden, and they set up a compromise with the former Confederates, and the compromise was that Mr. Hayes, in order to win election, decided to allow the South to handle the "Negro problem." He promised the removal of federal troops from the South, to allow the Southerners to do what they would with their Blacks. That was the deal; we were sold out not for the last time, and the Klan again shed the blood of Black people who were trying to achieve a modicum of freedom in this country.

In 1898, apartheid was legalized in the United States of America. In the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, they said that separate was equal. And there was much separateness but very little equality from that time until 1954, though I would argue there's still very little equality here.

These laws that I just discussed were utilized by the NAKN legal task force. These laws were still on the books, and they should be used — they were designed to be used — against Klan terrorists, and that was our objective. Well, it wasn't too long before we were given an opportunity to use those statutes.

Chattanooga is a small town in the east part of Tennessee, stuck between two large mountains which were the scene of Civil War violence. One summer night in April of 1981, a small Klan group led by a man named Lyndon Church decided that they were



**THE BATTLE OF LIBERTY PLACE:** On September 14, 1874, several hundred members of the White League routed a strong force of mostly Black metropolitan police at Liberty Place on Canal Street in New Orleans. Sixteen Whites were killed and perhaps three times as many Blacks in a brief but violent struggle during which both sides employed artillery as well as small arms. The Incident was provoked by the

intransigence of Louisiana's Radical governor, William Kellogg, who had attempted to prevent the unloading of a cargo of arms purchased legally by New Orleans Whites. Although the troops of the White League captured the statehouse the next day, the intervention of Federal troops at the order of President Grant deferred for two more years Louisiana's return to White rule.

The above drawing and the caption under it are reprinted without change from the August 1979 issue of the *National Vanguard*, a U.S. fascist publication.

going to go on a spree. They gathered eight-foot wooden crosses and drove to the heart of the Black community and set those crosses up in a very prominent location in that community so that all could see them.

They drove back around and with their double-barreled shotguns filled with buckshot, they drove slowly, saw five Black women walking on the street and aimed their shotguns at these women and deliberately emptied them into their bodies. Not content with that piece of violence, they drove on, reloaded their weapons and opened fire again, this time striking the windows of a parked car. The glass shattered, striking Fannie Crumsey's neck. On her house there are still markings where the shotgun pellets pene-

trated the walls. Had she been standing erect, she would not be here with us today.

The Klansmen were captured and a criminal trial ensued. They were charged with assault with intent to commit murder. The Klansmen's defense was that they were drunk and had no intention of murder. The key word in that statute was "intent," and unfortunately the prosecutor could not prove that intent. He neglected to charge them with night riding, cross burning, assault with a deadly weapon, going armed, firing weapons. In short, there were a number of other statutes the state prosecutor could have used, but didn't. You have a problem when your fate is placed in the hands of officials you had very little role in electing.

We also had a letter that the head of the Klan there, Bill Church, had written to Bill Wilkinson [head of the Invisible Empire KKK]. And in the letter he said, you know, Bill, I look to you as a model, a great Klan leader, and I want to be more like you. He said, you know, I hate seeing those "nigger-white babies." I can't stand seeing "niggers" and whites dating each other. I "visited" a few of them, and they don't date any more. This is in his letter. This man is a black belt in karate, about six feet five and three hundred pounds. The letter went on to discuss how they were preparing for a race war and a number of other violent actions.

If that letter didn't clearly show the intent of this man to commit murder, nothing else would. The letter was in the hands of the prosecutor and was never introduced as evidence. Strangely. The chief Klansmen, the head of the Klan, Bill Church and his cohort were acquitted of all charges. The other individuals who had been involved in the shooting were found guilty of minor assault. They served six months of a nine-month sentence and were fined fifty dollars. Black folks' lives aren't worth too much in Chattanooga.

Well, we didn't agree with that. By "we," I mean the Center for Constitutional Rights, and we were invited into Chattanooga to file a civil rights suit on behalf of the ladies. We filed two lawsuits in one legal document. The first part of the lawsuit was filed on behalf of the five Black women. In that lawsuit we sought monetary damages for the physical injuries they sustained on April 19, as well as punitive damages.

In addition, we filed a suit as a class action which sought an injunction, on behalf of all the Black citizens of Chattanooga. We said the Klan was a conspiracy to violate the rights of all the citizens of Chattanooga who were Black, that they had conducted certain activities to carry out that purpose, and that the Klan should be enjoined from engaging in certain actions. The injunction we sought was patterned after one the Department of Justice had itself obtained some twenty years earlier in Bogalusa, Louisiana, against a Klan group. They said they had jurisdiction in that case, but they had not taken a single Klan case since then.

During the trial, after some two years of pre-trial investigation and motions, we had learned something very interesting. The National Jury Project, which had assisted in the investigation, had done a survey for us. And that survey found a very interesting occurrence among the whites of Chattanooga. The survey found that whites in Chattanooga had a very different view of what the Klan was all about. They didn't look on the Klan as a terroristic organization. They saw the Klan as an organization that was dedicated to cleaning up their communities, an organization that enforced public morals, preventing

"looseness," drinking, running away from your family. And indeed, if you read some of the books about the Klan, particularly the one by Dr. Chalmers, who is here with us today and who wrote an excellent book called *Hooded Americanism*, you will see that the Klan did do that in white communities.

What the white respondents failed to note is that the way the Klan did that was the way they operated in our communities, using terror, violence and murder. That's how they enforced public morals. We also found that an overwhelming number of the white respondents felt that Black lawyers, out-of-town lawyers, civil rights lawyers had no business taking this kind of case in their city.

Now, as we had an all-Black legal team, all out-of-town and all civil rights lawyers, we knew that much about it. When we began to do our jury selection, the survey was brought out in every detail. Jurors got on the stand and when we asked them what they knew about the Klan, they said it was a good organization that protected white people. They were struck from the jury for cause. However, some individuals remained on the jury who feared the Klan, who feared the violence it involved.

A real conflict emerged with the Legal Services lawyers, who were defending the Klansmen in that case. Let me highlight that: Southeast Tennessee Legal Services, paid out of your and my tax dollars, defended Bill Church, the head of the Ku Klux Klan. When a Black woman came to the stand to be selected as a juror, they maintained that no Blacks should sit on that jury. Their position was that, because Blacks were involved in the suit, they should not sit on the jury, and they tried to strike every Black person from that jury for cause. For an organization like Legal Services, that came into existence from the struggles of Black and other poor people, to argue that Blacks can't sit on a jury. . . . The judge didn't agree with that. After a long battle, one Black woman sat on that jury of six.

We began our proof. We showed through the testimony of the five ladies the violence that had been done to them. Then we showed what the Klan was about, through Dr. Chalmers' testimony. And he testified that the Klan had four basic components. One is what he called "one hundred percent Americanism." The Klan is as old as apple pie in the United States, and has always been what they called in the old days a "native American party." I'm not speaking of Native Americans as we ordinarily think of them but of the pre-Klan formation known as the "Know Nothing" Party, because they didn't know nothing. They still don't know anything. Their notion was that no one but whites from Northern Europe should be here on these shores. The Klan is a continuation of that ideology.

A second component is moral conformity, which I spoke of earlier. Third, the notion of fraternity, of

brotherhood. And finally, and most important to us at any rate, is the notion of violent action. They do something about the problems.

It is interesting for us who deal with the Klan to understand what their attraction is. Most of the rank-and-file Klansmen, at least the ones I encountered in Chattanooga, were poor, uneducated, working-class whites. And the Klan gave them something to be proud of; it gave them a perspective, a purpose. And that's the attraction the Klan has for white, working-class America. And unless you all can develop some other method, or some other means of expression, you won't be able to defeat the Klan. When I say "you all," I mean that very specifically.

I mean "you all," not us, because Black folks can't organize against the Klan. We can organize our own community, but can't organize the white workers, because they won't listen to us. So it is incumbent upon white America to organize its own brothers and sisters and to teach them the evils of racism. That's your job. All too few of you — and I'm not criticizing anybody today — but all too few of the organizers I've had contact with do that job. And I love all the anti-Klan demonstrations, but until that job is done, I'm still going to have that problem. We're still going to have that problem. I feel very strongly about that.

The most important part of the case was to show the racist animus, to show not merely that the Klan had engaged in all these sorts of activities but that they had done it because of the race of these Black women. None of the Klansmen was willing to say, yeah, I hate niggers. We had to find a way to get them on this. And the way we did that was two-fold. One, we subpoenaed Church's ex-girlfriend. She was also about six foot three and weighed three hundred pounds. She was a tough mama, yes, she was. The night of the incident, he had beaten her senseless, because she was allegedly hanging out with a detective, beat her, bruised her and raped her and then stole her car, and that was the car with the Klan.

She got on the stand and testified about Church, that his favorite saying about Black people was, the only good nigger is a dead nigger. He had planned and conspired to kill the president of the NAACP in Chattanooga. He had also threatened her life on a number of occasions, for instance on one occasion she was driving along in her car and a Black man drove alongside her in another car and she glanced over at him, and this man, Church, with his huge hands, smacked her senseless for merely looking at a Black man.

Before the trial Church held a press conference — before his Legal Services lawyers told him to keep his mouth shut. At that conference, which we played for the judge, he said that his Klan group was going to reform in Chattanooga, they weren't going to wear Klan robes any more, because you can't do

much in a robe and it can be seen from miles away. They were going to wear combat uniforms, green fatigues, which were a lot more efficient for military action. He said that para-military training camps were being conducted in the hills surrounding Chattanooga, that people were being trained in weapons and automatic rifles and bombing techniques. And then a pressman asked him, Bill, I hear you talking about this stuff, but isn't it true that the Klan has a new image of non-violence? Bill answered, son, don't believe a word of it. No matter what they tell you, the Klan is still about violence, castrations and killing.

The jury was out on that case for four hours, and they came back, much to our surprise, and awarded the five Black women a half million dollars in damages. [Applause] Afterwards, a federal judge, who was a patrician type, handed down an injunction against the Klan, and that was the exact injunction we were seeking in our lawsuit, prohibiting the Klan from engaging in violence, terror, coming into the Black community. What's the benefit of that injunction? The benefit is that if a Klansman engages in that kind of action in Chattanooga again, the Black community does not have to rely on some non-interested white prosecutor to think about how it wants to handle the case. We, the Black lawyers, can bring that Klansman into the courtroom, have him jailed for contempt of court and given a prison term. Essentially, it avoids having to go through the whole trial again. You can have an immediate hearing and throw the sucker in jail as quickly as I just said it.

We're pleased about the victory in Chattanooga. It's important that the Klan can no longer function aboveboard in a legal way; they have to scurry around in the dark of night and get jobs and take pennies under the table. We also ran the head of the Klan out of Chattanooga — he now lives in Virginia and has not joined the Klan since the suit was filed. But we're also realistic and we understand that the legal route is not the only route and indeed may not be the best route for defeating the Klan.

Here in Georgia, Anne Braden described the Klan in the counties surrounding Atlanta as a lynch rope around the city of Atlanta. I think it's important for organizers to remember that lawyers have a role to play in aiding the movement, but that's all we can do is aid the movement. There has to be a movement. And you have the responsibility of building that movement, both in the Black community as well as in the white community. You see, the Klan rarely comes into my community to organize. It comes into yours. And it's important for you to speak out against that when they do come in, and to organize, as Malcolm would say, by any means necessary, to defeat the real terrorists in America. [Applause]



# THE KU KLUX KLAN AND FASCISM

by Ken Lawrence

Our movement has done a good job of surveying the history of 115 years of Ku Klux Klan racist terror — seeing how it developed and how it was stopped in the past. We have fairly well internalized most of those lessons and put them into practice in many ways, out if we are going to achieve a truly successful strategy to counter the Klan we have to understand not only how the Klan is the same organization of racist terror that it has been for 115 years, but also what is distinctive about it today that it wasn't 115 years ago.

Today the Ku Klux Klan is probably (I say probably because there are some qualifiers to this, but I think we can generally agree it is) the main face of militant fascism in the United States. That is such a commonplace for us to say that we almost don't think about it when we say it. so I ask you to think about it for a minute . . . because the Klan was not always a fascist organization. Yes, it was always a racist terrorist organization, but it was not always a fascist organization. The Ku Klux Klan was born in 1866. Fascism was not born until the ruins of World War I darkened Europe. The Klan was around for a half century before fascism existed in the world, and the Klan actually taught the fascists a great deal in their early years.

So when we think about it that way, let's compare what were the Klan's politics in its different resurgent periods of the past with what are its politics and its aims and strategies today.

In the 1860s the Klan, as Randy Scott-McLaughlin reminded us 'in his excellent presentation earlier, was led by the notorious General Nathan Bedford Forrest of the Confederacy. Forrest's military strategy, as every Southerner knows, was to be "fustest with the mostest" — he wasn't known as a military genius. It seems sometimes like a third of the counties in the South are named for him. Streets are named for him, housing projects are named for him, parks are named for him. He is known everywhere. Well, who was General Forrest? Before the Civil War he was the largest slave trader in Memphis, and during the war he was its greatest war criminal when he ordered the massacre of the garrison that was guarding Fort Pillow, the Black troops who surrendered to his much larger force. Rather than accept their surrender he ordered them slain to the last man, then gloated to his diary how the blood of the dead soldiers, dyed the Mississippi River red. That's who General Forrest was. When he took over leadership of the Klan in 1867, it represented the guerrilla con-

tinuation of the war he had tried to fight as a Confederate General. In essence he exchanged his Confederate grey for a white sheet. The earliest Klan, then, was a restorationist movement of the Confederacy.

The Invisible Empire was something quite different when it arose in the 1920s. It was essentially a bourgeois, nativist movement. As the Southern Poverty Law Center film documents so well, in fact, the KKK had the potential to go further than it actually did, because the truth is not only that in many places you had to be a Klansman to be elected to office, and you certainly at least had to have the active endorsement of the Klan, but the Klan came very close to capturing, on separate occasions, the national Democratic and Republican Parties. That's what kind of a movement it was. It was a right wing, white supremacist, but essentially mainstream bourgeois movement. That is, it intended to control, through the traditional political legal apparatus, the politics of the United States government and as many state and local governments as possible.

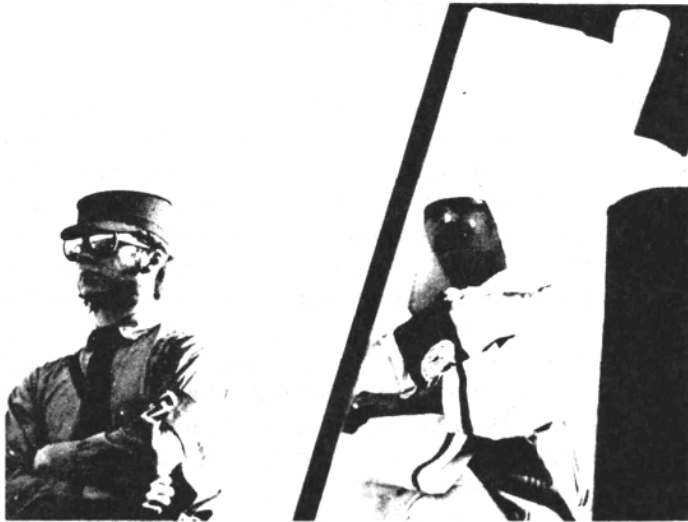
When the Klan was resurgent in the 1960s, it was essentially a backward-looking movement attempting to preserve what was most reactionary and most peculiar of the institutions of the segregated white South. It was under that banner, represented everywhere by the battle flag of the Confederacy, that it went out and did its beatings, bombings, lynchings, mutilations, and castrations.

It is something quite different today.

Today, it is as likely to fight under the banner of the twisted cross, the Nazi swastika, as under the banner of the Confederacy. In fact, it is the genius of the Klan leaders today that they have managed to merge those two movements into a single whole, and to create a coherent ideology out of those two divergent strains.

The fascist movement has a somewhat different history in this country. There is no way I can cover it in a brief talk, but some highlights are essential if we are to understand this, particularly since I think two extremes of this organization have somewhat misread the history — the history of the 1930s especially.

The fascist movement got its real insurgent birth in the United States from Henry Ford through his newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*. And the fascists today, by which I mean the Nazis and the Klan, consider his book, *The International Jew*, to be one of their bibles. Yet Henry Ford, as every school child knows, is a hero of the United States and someone whose image we are offered as a model. The truth is that *Ford* built his automobile empire as close as he could to the New Order fascist dictatorship to which



Nazis and Klansmen in North Carolina jointly celebrate the birthday of Adolf Hitler and have formed a "united racist front."  
Kenneth Englede

he aspired for society as a whole. He even established, for example, an entirely segregated two-city system, one for whites and one for Blacks. Inkster was the Black suburb of Dearborn, the white center for what was then the largest factory in the world, the River Rouge Ford plant. That little fascist mini-state was not broken until the CIO organized it in the 1940s, the last of the automobile empires to fall.

Built on the movement that Henry Ford founded, the fascists, but *not* the Klan, flourished in the 1930s. It is well to remember that one of the largest mass movements in the United States, and one of the few outside the mainstream political parties that was capable of packing Madison Square Garden in those years, was Father Coughlin's Christian Front. Huey Long built a similar movement in the state of Louisiana which was led by the notorious anti-Semite Gerald L. K. Smith, who became one of the most important figures first in the reconstitution of the fascist movement in the 1950s and gradually bringing it into concert with the Ku Klux Klan over a period of time.

So we need to understand not only the Klan history, but also the quite independent fascist history, which have merged to become a single movement with an ideology that is quite different from the ideology of the Confederacy of Nathan Bedford Forrest, or the nativism of David C. Stephenson, the Klan leader of the 1920s who was the main political figure in that rebirth, or even of Sam Bowers and Robert Shelton of the 1960s. Today many of those key figures of the sixties have accommodated themselves quite well to this new ideology of fascism which they did not previously profess in their earlier guise. Thus we see the rise in North Carolina of the United Racist Front which carried out the Greensboro massacre and which represents, I think, the peak of their ability to fuse these two movements.

The Ku Klux Klan did not become fascist overnight, and the development was uneven.

Naturally racists, even when divided by important points of ideology, have considerable political agreement of which they are conscious. So it is no accident that one of the leading fascist organizers of the thirties, Gerald L. K. Smith, also was a close kin to the Klans of the fifties and sixties, and that most of the Klans borrowed heavily from his journal, *The Cross and the Flag*.

The earliest attempt at merging the two movements was in 1940 at Camp Nordland, New Jersey, when the German American Bund and the Ku Klux Klan met, 3,500 strong, on a Bund platform beneath a fiery cross. Anti-Semite Edward James Smythe presided, having spent three years working to consummate such a coming together. Arthur H. Bell, the KKK's Grand Giant, shook hands with August Klapprott, the Bund's vice president, and Klapprott declared, "The principles of the Bund and the Klan are the same."

But that merger was not to be. A storm of unfavorable publicity forced the Klan's Imperial Wizard, James Colescott, who had originally authorized participation in the meeting, to recant, and to repudiate the Nazis. Eventually Colescott's literature listed fascism among the foreign "isms" the Klan officially opposed, and Smythe's dream was stillborn.

But from that time on, some of the most committed Nazis viewed the KKK as their most likely road to power. Among these was J. B. Stoner, who was a~ Klan Kleagle (organizer) in Tennessee during World War Two, but was also organizing a "national anti-Jewish political party" and distributing the *Protocols*. In 1958 the National States Rights Party was founded by Edward Fields, who had worked with Stoner in the forties, and Matthias Koehl. (Koehl later succeeded George Lincoln Rockwell as head of the American Nazi Party.)

Stoner's Nazi sympathies were never veiled — he told the *Atlanta Constitution* in 1946 that Hitler had been too moderate and that his party wanted "to make being a Jew a crime, punishable by death." But he also practiced law jointly with KKK leader James Venable of Atlanta. During the early years of the NSRP, Stoner's role was low-profile (the 1958 Birmingham church bombing for which he's been found guilty was committed during this period), but he eventually emerged as its national chairman and main spokesman.

The United Racist Front, a Klan/Nazi umbrella organization formed in September 1979 in North Carolina, carried out the Greensboro massacre in November of that year, and NSRP leaders Stoner and Fields saw the opportunity to hasten the fascist development of the whole movement. Fields organized the New Order Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, combining the two movements in the name. Though

considered by Klan-watchers such as the Anti-Defamation League as a relatively insignificant splinter, this was actually a shrewd tactic.

The New Order Klan simultaneously projected its politics (by organizing a union, then calling a strike to protest the hiring of Mexican workers at the Zartic Frozen Foods plant in Cedartown, Georgia) and promoted "Klan unity" (by inviting leaders of the various Klan factions to a meeting to "honor" two of the Greensboro killers). These moves paid off handsomely as one local Klan leader after another has aligned himself with Stoner and Fields.

What is the difference then between this new guise of the Klan and the past that I have talked about? One difference, and this is one thing I've learned from the writings of David Edgar\*, is that the role of racism and the role of anti-Semitism and the role of scapegoating in general is quite different ideologically for a fascist movement from that of a right-wing conservative movement or a traditional Klan-type movement. That is, it is *not* to put people in their place. It is *not* to make a sub-class out of them and to exploit, or super-exploit, their labor. It is *genocidal*. It is *exterminationist*.

I urge everyone, despite its horror, to acquire the manual of the current Klan/Nazi strategy, and to understand what that strategy is. That book is the novel *The Turner Diaries*, written by William Pierce of the National Alliance under the pseudonym Andrew MacDonald. It is a stirring call to power. To cast it in literary terms, it is the flip side of *The Iron Heel*. Where Jack London projected a look back at the revolution of the future to see its horrors, William Pierce uses that device to show how the revolution that creates the New Order comes into being.

Upon reading this book you will find that the strategy described is very similar to the strategy of the Nazis in Europe, which ideologically is summed up by the person responsible for creating it, a French fascist, Michel Faci, who uses the *nom de guerre* LeLoup. He calls it the *Strategy of Tension*. The Bologna and other bombings are attempts at social destabilization which have as their assumption that the fascist movement has reached its peak "respectable" strength and that now is the time to polarize society and build on the fears, the tensions, and the disarray that can be created by disrupting the fabric of politics as usual. That's the politics of *The Turner Diaries*.

The book begins, for example, after a period of difficulty and repression of the right, with bombing the FBI building in Washington. It goes from there onward to a situation of nuclear war which is launched, not by the government, but by the fascists who seize control of the nuclear weapons. Let me read you just a couple of passages.

Pierce has many dialogues where he differentiates between the politics of his movement and the conser-

vatives. He always personifies these political views, as any good novelist does:

he didn't understand that one of the major purposes of political terror, always and everywhere, is to force the authorities to take reprisals and to become more repressive, thus alienating a portion of the population and generating sympathy for the terrorists. And the other purpose is, to create unrest by destroying the population's sense of security and their belief in the invincibility of the government.

Other passages in here indicate a similar desire to destabilize society and view that period of destabilization very much as the secret National Front document quoted by David Edgar described the situation they anticipate arising in England.

The culmination of this he describes as follows:

*August 1, 1993.* Today has been the Day of the Rope — a grim and bloody day, but an unavoidable one. Tonight, for the first time in weeks, it is quiet and totally peaceful throughout all of southern California. But the night is filled with silent horrors; from tens of thousands of lampposts, power poles, and trees throughout this vast metropolitan area the grisly forms hang.

In the lighted areas one sees them everywhere. Even the street signs at intersections have been pressed into service, and at practically every street corner I passed this evening on my way to HQ there was a dangling corpse, four at every intersection. Hanging from a single overpass only about a mile from here is a group of about 30, each with an identical placard around its neck bearing the printed legend, "I betrayed my race." Two or three of that group had been decked out in academic robes before they were strung up, and the whole batch are apparently faculty members from the nearby UCLA campus.

He describes how they did this:

Squads of our troops with synchronized watches suddenly appeared in a thousand blocks at once, in fifty different residential neighborhoods, and every squad leader had a long list of names and addresses. The blaring music suddenly stopped and was replaced by the sound of thousands of doors splintering, as booted feet kicked them open....

One of two things happened to those the troops dragged out onto the streets. If they were non-Whites — and that included all the Jews and everyone who even looked like he had a bit of non-White ancestry — they were shoved into hastily formed columns and started on their no-return march to the canyon in the foothills north of the city. The slight-

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\*"Racism, Fascism, and the Politics of the National Front," a *Race and Class* pamphlet, available for 50 cents plus postage from Institute of Race Relations, 247 Pentonville Road, London N1 9NG, England.

est resistance, any attempt at back talk, or any lagging brought a swift bullet.

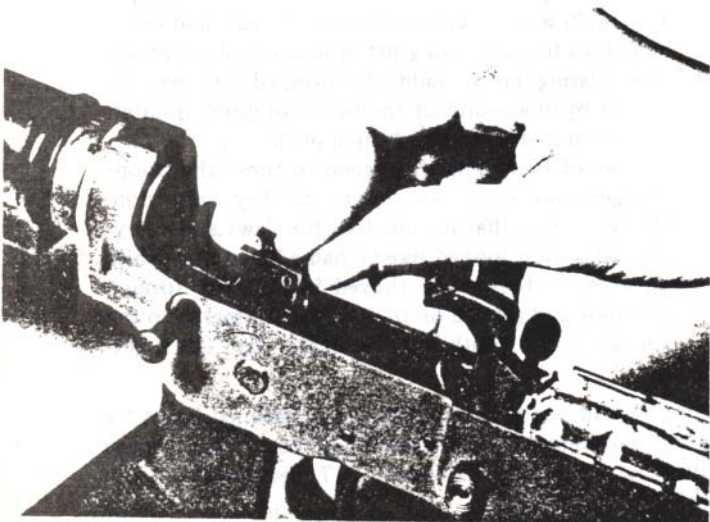
The Whites, on the other hand, were, in nearly all cases, hanged on the spot. One of the two types of pre-printed placards was hung on the victim's chest, his hands were quickly taped behind his back, a rope was thrown over a convenient limb or signpost with the other end knotted around his neck, and he was then hauled clear of the ground with no further ado and left dancing on air while the soldiers went to the next name on their list.

The hangings and the formation of the death columns went on for about 10 hours without interruption. When the troops finished their grim work early this afternoon and began returning to their barracks, the Los Angeles area was utterly and completely pacified. The residents of neighborhoods in which we could venture safely only in a tank yesterday were trembling behind closed doors today, afraid even to be seen peering through the crack in drawn drapes. Throughout the morning there was no organized or large-scale opposition to our troops, and by this afternoon even the desire for opposition had evaporated.

That's a little bit more than you probably wanted to hear; it's more than I want even to consider, but I think it's important to understand what that strategy is. It's very different from bombing a church here, lynching a civil rights worker there, in order to keep people in their place. It is actually a vision of seizing control of the entire society, exterminating minorities and Jews and creating something quite different.

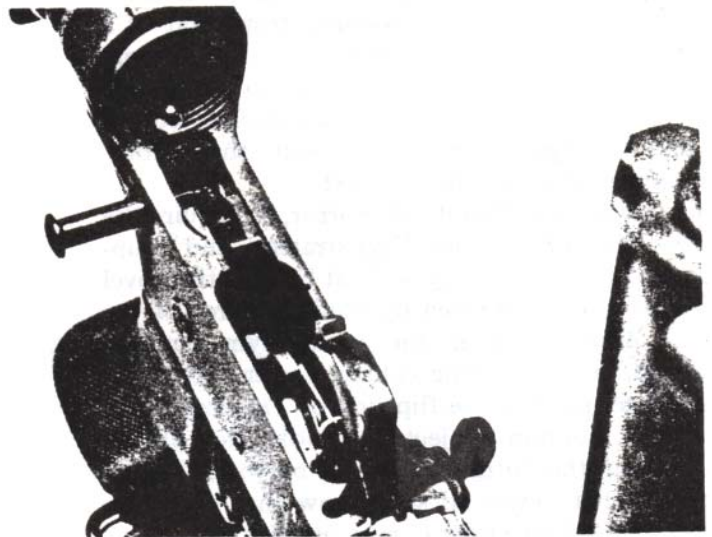
To accomplish that strategy, which they are deadly serious about, something quite different from their previous approaches to organization and mass political action are necessary — and are in effect now. One area of that work that I've followed carefully has been the gun shows throughout the South and how they recruit through them.

I want to show you two documents, both popular pamphlets I've bought recently at gun shows. One is a



manual that shows how to convert semi-automatic weapons to fully automatic machine guns with parts that are commonly available for sale without any records being kept at these gun shows. The other is a book entitled *Elementary Field Interrogation*, which is a torture manual, literally. It is written, according to a publicity blurb put out by the publisher, by a former Phoenix program interrogator for the CIA during the Vietnam War who has now dedicated his services to the fascist movement. There are plenty of illustrations of these tortures in case you can't figure it out for yourself from reading the text. They are sufficiently horrifying, more so even than some passages from *The Turner Diaries*, that I won't read them to you. But I urge you to familiarize yourself with this grizzly stuff anyway.

The night riders and lynch mobs of the past had



no need for torture manuals or machine guns. But the fascist paramilitaries who train in the Klan, Nazi, and "survivalist" camps in preparation for what they call "the coming race war" do need them. These are significant differences from the KKK's previous incarnations, and we need to understand them.

Then of course, the other thrust, the ideological thrust that David Edgar told us about, is the so-called Historical Revisionist movement. This is the latest copy of their journal, which looks quite scholarly and impressive — the *Journal of Historical Review*. The envelope in which it arrived bears a non-profit organization postmark from Torrance, California — Liberty Lobby's West Coast headquarters of Willis Carto — which means they have a 501(c)(3) tax exemption. Pierce's National Alliance does not have such a tax exemption right now, but the ACLU has a case in Federal District Court in Washington suing to get him one, so he will probably have one soon.

Now, the traditional Klan did not need this kind of document — a torture manual. It did not need this kind of document — a document about creating fully automatic weapons to build an army with. It did not



need to deny the Nazi Holocaust. And it did not have books like *The Turner Diaries*, which all of the resurgent Klans, every one of them from Edward Fields to Don Black to Bill Wilkinson, use as their manual. In fact, they all have bulk discount prices for copies of it which, among other things, proves that they are considerably more unified as to program and strategy than they ostensibly appear to be. They didn't need those in the past because they had a different program then. Therefore I want to suggest that our program has to learn not only what we know and what we try to practice based on the movements of the past that successfully defeated the Klan in its earlier guises, but also the lessons that have been learned, sometimes under quite different circumstances, by anti-fascists both in this country and around the world.

I'm not going to spin that program here.

It's going to take some time to do it, some debate. I hope that we're ready for debate. It's taken us three years to get to that point, but I think we're ready.

I do want to say, though, that it's going to take a more unified movement than the one we have thus far built. This is much too small a meeting. I don't

want to take anything away from the accomplishments, particularly of the work that Lyn Wells and others have done to bring people here, but we all know this is too small a meeting. It needs to be much bigger. And one of the reasons is that this movement, our anti-Klan, anti-fascist movement, is fragmented right now — I believe needlessly so. There is a considerable amount we can do to try to heal that fracture and make it a stronger movement. For my part, I gave a talk somewhat similar, but on a different theme, at the national conference of People United — the other national anti-Klan coalition — in Baltimore a few months ago, and stressed basically the same thing. The two national coalitions should get together. There is plenty of evidence we can. A lot of people from People United are here at this conference, and some of our members were at the other one. Many of us belong to both coalitions. Whatever the reasons may have been in the past that kept our movement fractured, they aren't valid any more. If we're going to defeat a newly resurgent *fascist* Klan, we need the strongest possible movement we can have.

Thank you very much.

# HUEY P. LONG: BAYOU FASCISM?

*There wants to be revolution, I tell you. I seen this domination of capital, seen it for seventy years. What do these rich folks care for the poor man? They care nothing — not for his pain, his sickness nor his death. And now they're talking again about keeping the poor folks from voting — that same talk. I say there wants to be a revolution.*

Huey P. Long's father, 1935

by Lance Hill

When I was about fifteen years old I happened across two pictures in my school history book that appeared so peculiar that the images are vivid in my mind today. One was a photograph of a strangely dressed Black man reclining regally in the back seat of a large car. He was surrounded by imposing-looking men, apparently bodyguards. It was Marcus Garvey. The other picture was of a roly-poly, jovial-looking man, dressed in a rumpled suit. It was Huey P. Long.

Neither of these men, nor the movements that they had led, could be explained by the text. Nothing in the historian's tedious recitation of dates and wearisome analysis could explain this apparent ripple of unrest.

Now it seems that Huey is being resurrected because he is perceived as a symbol of recalcitrance and radicalism, traits that do not appear immediately among white people. He was feared by big business, he outraged pompous politicians, and he carefully created an image as the voice of the impoverished and disenfranchised.

The Houston Opera has commissioned an opera based loosely on his life; Gore Vidal is writing the



screenplay for a movie about Huey; people are reprinting his Share Our Wealth programs as a nostrum for modern ills. His revival makes it imperative that the fascist character of his movement and the lessons therein be grasped.

## Brief Overview of Huey's Life

Historians are fond of rummaging about in Long's early life, attempting to trace his later politics to some influence or trauma of early life. I will touch on this only briefly since it is central to my perspective that the "great leader" of any movement is transformed by the various political, economic, and social forces of the epoch. Early influences can only enable us to apprehend the diversity of experiences, but they should not be confused with the impelling force of a movement.

Huey was born in 1893 in Winnfield, Louisiana, a small town in the backwoods of the verdant rolling hills. The son of a populist partisan, Huey grew up comfortably in the midst of powerless, abjectly impoverished white farmers. Probably no other section of the country witnessed such chronic want, often bordering on famine. With none of the customary decencies of life afforded laborers elsewhere, these

people sporadically entered into the radical white populism that convulsed the northern part of the state.

Wobblies, anti-racist populists, white supremacist populists, and white supremacist reactionaries all discovered impassioned adherents on the same terrain. Democracy was an institution that was to be rendered harmless if any one of these political currents were to become an influential force. For Huey, a hybrid of petty bourgeois populism and white supremacy were essential influences on his early life, but more important, an abiding conviction that democratic institutions were tools of subjugation, obstructions to the revolution he envisioned.

Huey left home to pursue a career as an itinerant salesman. This phase of his life was more rewarding politically than financially, since Huey was to hone his understanding of the political dynamics of the backwoods settlements. But Huey was soon to grow restless, so in 1914 he entered law school and quickly passed the bar in one year, a result of his phenomenal memory and equally formidable talent of manipulation. He returned to his home in Winn Parish to pursue a practice that relied heavily on workmen's compensation cases. It was this area that first introduced him to public political life.

Huey had been drawn to the state capital to engage in a campaign to rewrite the workmen's compensation laws that were heavily biased toward the employers. It was there that he was befriended by Senator S. J. Harper, a radical anti-capital advocate of workers' rights and non-intervention in World War I. Senator Harper had the misfortune of offending the patriotic sentiments of his fellow solons, and soon he faced a ludicrous espionage charge. Huey took to his legal defense and successfully won his acquittal.

An interesting quality of Senator Harper's that receives little attention was his anti-Semitism: the sen-

ator was a dedicated anti-Semite and routinely corresponded with other virulent proponents. No doubt Huey was exposed to the senator's diatribes against "Jewish capital," nor was this kind of talk new to him. I mention it because Huey's recurring association with anti-Semites at least provides credence to the speculation that his movement could forge ideological links with other fascist organizations.

At the age of 25 Huey campaigned like a thunderbolt through his old sales territory, Northern Louisiana, and won a seat on the heretofore effete State Railroad Commission. Here he began a turbulent career, part myth and part fact, that endeared him to the masses of desperate white farmers as a rebel and populist. Huey quickly maneuvered on the commission to allow for a wider construction of its jurisdiction, rapidly bringing the great nemesis of the poor, Standard Oil, under his control.

Over the years Huey managed to harass the utilities, big oil companies, and Bell Telephone as a head of the crusading regulatory commission, and actually won several concessions from them. Using this position he managed to catapult himself into the governor's office in 1928. He built a pervasive political

machine through patronage and survived the ill-conceived assaults of his arch-rivals, the New Orleans old regulars' machine.

In 1932 Huey secured the U.S. Senate seat in Washington, and through an obsequious governor, simultaneously ruled the state government. Louisiana had become a complete and total dictatorship. All three branches of government were controlled by the "Kingfish," and they functioned purely as rubber stamps for Huey's mandates. Capital negotiated directly with Huey.

By 1935 Huey was the single most influential political figure on the horizon. He had carefully nurtured a dynamic image through massive propaganda and national radio programs. He headed what was potentially the first mass fascist organization with a membership of over four and a half million.

Roosevelt considered him the principal obstacle to his continued tenure, as Huey hinted strongly at mounting a third party challenge in 1936. On September 8, 1935, a somber young doctor named Seymore Weiss walked casually into the state capitol building in Baton Rouge and shot Huey to death. Weiss was instantly set upon by armed guards, who riddled his body beyond recognition. The Kingfish died and his empire rapidly



The Veto Protest Parade during the soldiers' bonus fight

crumbled.

### Long's Political Program

Actually, Huey's politics have to be viewed on three levels in order to appreciate the import of his movement. These are not easily separated out, but let me outline them as follows:

First, there is the arena of social legislation, those accomplishments that he pursued and subsequently publicized as embodying his social program. Secondly, there are corporative programs, those which represent an approach to the state that foreshadowed the American fascist response to capitalist crisis. Finally there is the essential effect of all of these combined — the essential, objective quality of the Long movement, which I hold to be fascist.

From the beginning of his political life Huey had talked about the maldistribution of wealth, and he sought ways through social legislation to redress this problem. (Ultimately this was distilled in the Share Our Wealth program which called for a guaranteed annual income, limited work days, and ceilings on earnings, although these programs were not advocated together until 1934.)

During his tenure, Huey managed to provide old age pensions, free books for school children, adult education programs, and free medical care in some areas. He substantially eased the tax burden for poor whites, completely eliminating property tax for Blacks.

There is some debate surrounding the sweep and effectiveness of his programs, but all agree that in the eyes of poor whites he was a crusader for their needs. Roosevelt's New Deal program was consciously engineered to deflect the Long movement as well as to arrogate aspects of Huey's program as the New Deal's unique contribution.

More revealing for this analysis was the increasing importance Long placed on the role of the state in salvaging capitalism from its apocalyptic crisis. Similar to Mussolini

(of whom Huey genuinely knew little), Long had arrived at the conclusion that the solution to economic crisis was the intervention of the state as a reconciling force detached from the interests of labor or capital.

This corporatist approach was not just bombast on Huey's part: he did not hesitate to lend the full weight of his machine to the claim that he opposed super-government, be it the capitalist, the working class, or other fascists (the Ku Klux Klan). In pursuit of this, Huey set out to rescue Louisiana from the suffocating grasp of the antiquated laissez faire policy of a rapidly collapsing capitalist class.

His policy toward extensive bridge and road development was not, as some suggest, merely a ploy to facilitate his constituency's travel to the polls. The massive effort created thousands of jobs, prefiguring the WPA programs of the New Deal, while at the same time creating the arteries for increased capitalist development. The old Bourbons had ignored the elementary prerequisites for industrialization in the South, and Louisiana had struggled into the thirties on roads of mud, untravelable by truck or auto.

Huey complemented this with legislative packages that included cold storage facilities for farmers' crops and health care for a physically deteriorating class. He intervened as the monolithic state in the Louisiana banking crisis and cajoled large Eastern banks into rescuing the local banks from collapse. His local experience carried over into national politics, where he became a constant nuisance to the Roosevelt administration with his demand for a radical banking policy that included federally insured deposit programs.

As early as 1931 Huey was vigorously enacting legislation to stem the crisis of overproduction, using methods that were reluctantly adopted years later by Roosevelt. Huey had decided that the only way to eliminate the surplus of cotton that had driven prices down



August 29, 1932. Clad in a cotton night-shirt, on a cotton mattress with cotton sheets and blankets, Long signs the No-Crop Bill forbidding cotton planting during the coming year.

was to completely ban its production in 1932.

He quickly rammed the legislation through the Louisiana House and Senate, only to have surrounding states abstain from his scheme. His grasp of the necessity of radical intervention by the state, as well as his disregard for legal obstructions to these actions, made him far more effective at rendering the crisis less severe.

All of this culminated in an event that most historians mention casually but which reveals to me the depth and the vision of his philosophy of the state (I'm speaking of an implied viewpoint). In 1935 Standard Oil responded to a five-cent-a-barrel tax on their oil produced in Louisiana by laying off thousands of employees and threatening to close their Baton Rouge refinery, the largest in the world. Without reserve, Huey promptly informed Standard Oil that he was prepared to expropriate the refinery, or run them out of the state and build a publicly owned refinery (the profits of which, either way, would go to send poor people's children to college).

While the national office of Standard scoffed at the idea, the local Standard officials panicked at what they knew was entirely possi-



ble in Huey's Louisiana. What ensued was a negotiated agreement with Huey and an amicable resolution. But Huey had revealed two things: first, that he was willing to move decisively to salvage capitalism from itself; and second, in his form of government one need not negotiate with labor, legislatures, or courts. Huey *was* the state.

These were the things that Huey said of himself, the things that he wanted to be known as his vision. But none of these programs are particularly hallmarks, or proof, of fascism. They do resemble closely the political directions of European fascist movements, however. Two features of the Long movement are salient features in fascism — the preservation of capital in crisis and the elimination of mediating institutions in the class struggle (unions, parliamentary democracy, a free press).

I believe the first feature is borne out in the above-mentioned programs. On this point Huey once entreated his fellow senators that his campaign ". . . is no campaign to soak the rich, it is a campaign to save the rich. It is a campaign the success of which they will wish for when it is too late." When queried about the similarity of his politics to fascist policy, he replied that he was democratic.

What was his definition of democracy?

My theory is that a leader gets up a program and then he goes out and explains it, patiently and patiently until they get it. He asks for a mandate, and if they give it to him he goes ahead with the program, hell or high water. He don't tolerate no opposition from the old gang politicians, the legislatures, the courts, the corporations or anybody.

Compare Huey's perspective with one of his contemporaries:

We only made use of democratic means in order to gain power, and . . . after the seizure of power we would ruthlessly deny to our op-

ponents all those means which they had granted to us during the time of our opposition.

Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels

Huey's theory of democracy was profoundly anti-democratic, but it did recognize the mass character of the fascist movement, the fact that fascism rose to power with the support of a significant majority of the masses. What most historians have failed to understand is that Huey's ruthlessness was not the *result* of gaining power, it was the *condition* of his rise to power.

### The Long Machine

The fact that Huey evolved from a rather traditional political boss career has tended to obfuscate the fascistic form of the political machine which he built. Fascism appears in many forms, but the definitive rule is that it always reflects the entire history of the bourgeoisie's attempt to contain the class struggle.

Lacking a tradition of clearly defined class organizations, fascism in its incipient form in Louisiana absorbed itself in the electoral machines, the only arena of political life. White supremacy's sway over poor whites had rendered appeals to direct action and class consciousness superfluous.

The thing that made Huey's machine unique was that it was not designed to compete with other machines; it was designed to eliminate them. Accordingly, the machine itself developed a structure that would atomize its own followers as well as yield up a variety of devices to ensure implementation of its policies. (The Long machine was essentially the bureaucratic power base for what was to be the mass organization, Share Our Wealth clubs [SOW]. In Louisiana the machine committees actually became SOW clubs and Long culled cadre for the national campaign from his old machine.)

What is amazing is the similarity of the machine to the fascist orga-

nization as described by Hannah Arendt in her book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. The backbone of the machine was the local committee, typically consisting of the sheriff, officeholders, and a few political allies, their allegiance more opportunist than ideological. Reinforced with 26,000 patronage jobs, the machine demanded complete loyalty.

They were kept in a state of perpetual suspicion and infighting, something Huey encouraged. In fact, Huey made it a policy when "fixing" elections that none of his candidates would win by wide margins. This was intended to create a sense of uncertainty and dependence in his own organization.

At times he would even arrange to have one of his own candidates lose, thus feeding the anxiety and fear that permeated the machine and the state as a whole. This conscious manipulation is disturbingly similar to Arendt's analysis of various fascist forms of organization.

Another striking similarity is the fluidity of the high command, or inner circle of the machine. Huey's inner circle, just like Hitler's, was a diverse grouping of people who played different roles in his organization. In both cases the effectiveness of the leader depended on his ability to control the intrigue and machinations to his own benefit.

Most books written about Long spend a great deal of time on his abuses of the democratic process. Suffice it to say that Huey flagrantly violated every legal restraint imaginable with impunity. His machine made full use of a secret police force (State Bureau of Investigation) that operated in plain clothes, their identities known only to the machine.

People were occasionally seized by these goons, known as Huey's cossacks, and secreted away, sometimes held incommunicado without legal charges. On at least two occasions Huey declared martial law and called out the national guard to carry out his dirty work. He used the myriad state agencies to destroy op-

position newspapers or businesses.

When all else failed he allegedly kept secret files on all his opponents (and interestingly, his supporters) which he could use for various seamy schemes. The development of a para-military political group never occurred in Huey's time, yet ample evidence exists to indicate that the machine could muster up large forces to do physical battle with anti-Longs.

The point here is that Long seized control of a provincial government power before embarking on a fascist project, thus obviating the immediate need for a political-military wing such as the Italian squadrista.

### Share Our Wealth: The Fascist Meteor

Early in 1933 the Roosevelt high command was eyeing this rump, outlandish demagogue from the Pelican State with increasing trepidation. Roosevelt considered Huey as a "strongman" threat from the left, with Gen. Douglas MacArthur posing the same challenge from the right.

Apparently Roosevelt's apprehension was confirmed in a secret poll that his organization commissioned: Huey could sweep the South on a third party ticket.

In fact, Huey's strategy was flexible, but he was convinced he would be in the White House by 1940. His plan was to field a third party candidate in 1936, stealing the Southern Dixiecrat and left vote from Roosevelt and throwing the election to the Republicans. After four years of conservative and devastating Republican rule, the country would be on the verge of economic collapse, and Huey would sally forth to sweep the country off its feet. It was a shrewd strategy, and at all points realizable.

Huey had rapidly developing support in Northern industrial areas, and news stands in California ordered his newspaper in lots of one thousand. Yet no poll could fathom the explosive power of the Long

**HEAR**  
**Huey P. Long**  
United States Senator  
**On All Issues of the Day**

Persons desiring questions answered on any State, National or International questions requested to write out the same and hand to chairman of meetings.

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**Wednesday, November 8**

Oakgrove	10:30 a. m.
Winnabore	3:00 p. m.
Monroe, New City School	7:00 p. m.

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**Thursday, November 9**

Ruston	10:30 a. m.
Gibbsland	3:00 p. m.
Minden	7:00 p. m.

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**Friday, November 10**

Natchitoches	10:30 a. m.
Leesville	3:00 p. m.
Alexandria	7:00 p. m.

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**Saturday, November 11**

Marksville	10:30 a. m.
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machine.

For instance, in 1932 Huey moved his forces into Arkansas to back a sympathetic longshot for the Senate, Hattie Caraway. Using whirlwind tactics, masterful propaganda, and his own prodigious energy, Long steamrolled her into office to the amazement of all observers.

It was once said that the history of fascism was the history of underestimation, and certainly in 1932 only a few anxious observers felt the earth tremble when Huey spoke.

Since Roosevelt was firmly entrenched in the Democratic Party and Huey had neither the time nor the disposition to try to win its nomination, Huey initiated his first mass political organization: the Share Our Wealth Society. SOWS was in existence for a brief 18 months of Huey's life. The organization was comprised of clubs in all states, although most were in the South. Most people joined as a result of listening to one of Huey's folksy national radio programs.

Many assume that it was the formal structure for a vast mass fascist organization or at least a mass electoral party. What should concern us here is the phenomenal growth of the organization, an event that paralyzed the left yet slowly disappears from history

books with time's passage.

The SOWS program was simple: redistribution of wealth, guaranteed annual income, guaranteed pensions, new cars and new homes from the money expropriated from the rich. The response to this nostrum was sudden; within 18 months the society had enlisted 26,000 clubs with over 4,600,000 members.

The average mail load for the 24-hour-a-day office in Washington was 60,000 letters a week, but on occasion (after a national radio speech by Huey) the office received 30,000 letters a day for over three weeks. Interestingly, office workers observed that at first the letters were crudely written, probably sent by poor rural whites. But near the end of Huey's life there was a steady increase in letters indicating a middle-class background.

It would be safe to assume that Long was forging a mass petty-bourgeois organization beyond his old constituency. Given that the adult population of the U.S. was roughly 55 million then, the 7,550,000 people on the SOWS mailing list reflect the seriousness of the movement's scope. Coupled with Huey's own personal newspaper, *American Progress* (peak subscription of 375,000), the Long propaganda machine presented one of the most formidable challenges to traditional bourgeois rule in the thirties.

Sitting at the administrative head of this organization was Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith. Smith was hand-picked by Huey to head up SOWS, and the young radical preacher from Shreveport took up his duties with the passion of a true zealot.

He was an extremely capable organizer, in many ways the actual organizational mind of SOWS. He and Huey had extensive contact, although Smith's servile devotion to his new-found deity sometimes rubbed the Kingfish the wrong way.

Often described as a LaFollette Progressive, only a few admit that Smith was a militant anti-Semite and fascist thinker before he joined Huey's organization. Only a year



STRANGE INTERLUDE.

The nation's cartoonists had a field day after Huey's encounter in the washroom at Sands Point

#### A contemporary cartoonist's view

before, Smith had written America's self-pronounced fuehrer, William Dudley Pelley, offering to help set up America's first fascist "silver shirts."

Some historians ruminate that Smith put aside these politics temporarily during his tenure as SOWS head. The suggestion is absurd. Smith later became a stalwart in the anti-Semitic, racist right-wing organizations agitating against the civil rights movement. Both apologists and detractors of Long are increasingly reluctant to concede that one of the largest mass organizations of the thirties was administered by an anti-Semitic fascist.

The view of many of Long's contemporaries that his movement constituted a left-wing insurgency has prevented many historians from identifying Huey with fascism as an ideology. But the European experience is replete with examples of fascist movements coming to power on populist-sounding programs with significant left-wing factions operating within them.

The example of Mussolini is enlightening since his transformation from Marxist leader to fascist ideologue paralleled the movement of large numbers of socialists into the fascist ranks. Also the Italian experience did not emphasize the anti-Semitism of the Nazis, nor was it

particularly concerned with programs and ideology.

As Arendt shows in her book, all the fascist movements spent tremendous energy trying to deny they ever promoted progressive-sounding programs, since the actual tasks of salvaging capitalism demanded the opposite.

It appears that Huey was serious about organizing an electoral third party, and the likelihood of this evolving in to a serious fascist challenge was strong. For several months Huey had met with radio right-winger and fascist admirer Father Charles Coughlin, and the only comment that they would make about their parleys was that they agreed on their general aims.

No doubt Huey could have pulled together a motley coalition of Townsendites, white populists, and even Upton Sinclair's End Poverty in America Clubs (large numbers of Sinclair's activists were members of California SOW clubs). Whatever left wing that developed in the party could be dealt with later on, perhaps in the same manner Hitler "eliminated" his troublesome Strasser grouping.

Certainly all of the links with overt fascists already existed in the coalition, as well as in the person of Gerald L. K. Smith. Fascist theoretician Lawrence Dennis commented that Huey was the closest approach to a "national fascist leader," and Dennis urged Huey to take the reins of American fascism with his endorsement.

#### Huey Long and Racism

It defies all logic why there is still a debate over whether Huey was a white supremacist. He ruled a state that subjugated Blacks in virtual slavery with no political rights whatsoever. He openly proclaimed himself in favor of white-supremacist rule. The evidence that historians dredge up to substantiate their claim that Huey was a closet liberal is his apparent hesitancy to use race as an issue in his campaigns, and also the tangible benefits accruing

to Blacks under the Long administration.

In fact, several programs directly benefitted Blacks, although the motivations behind this generosity are open to speculation. For instance, at one point Huey reduced property tax in an attempt to relieve the burden on his poor white farmer supporters. Consequently the new levy all but eliminated tax on the even poorer Black farmers.

Adult education classes were implemented to overcome illiteracy of the poor, yet it was the mass of illiterate Blacks that made such extensive use of this program that Huey was forced to rearrange the class schedules to night classes, since whites were grumbling about their Black workers going to school instead of working. At one point a close associate of Huey's mused that it was impossible to legislate for poor whites without helping poor Blacks inadvertently.

It is true that Huey was relatively free of racist tirades in public, although he could engage in vicious racist harangues when the occasion called for it. There are several factors that militated against his use of race as an issue.

Since Blacks were held in semi-slavery and had not presented a revolutionary political challenge for several decades, it was difficult to convince anyone that Blacks were the source of their problems. Keep in mind that Huey shaped his program and myth out of an understanding of what was credible to poor whites as well as what was safe from co-optation by his opposition. Any other political figure could have stolen Huey's thunder if that thunder was the issue of race.

But even the Klan was hostile to Huey on only one issue — radical economics. Probably the most revealing lesson is that those Southern demagogues who did choose to exploit the white supremacy of poor whites never approached the stature of Huey in their political careers.

In reality, Huey never tampered significantly with the tradition of white supremacy, nor did he exac-

erbate it. But there is sufficient reason to believe that in both the area of anti-Semitism and white supremacy the Long movement could have readily transformed itself into a genocidal movement comparable to European fascism.

A young Roy Wilkins once interviewed Huey shortly before his assassination and focussed on the issue of race. The "liberal populist" comforted Wilkins regarding a recent lynching in Franklinton, Louisiana, by telling him, "We just lynch an occasional nigger."

After Huey had pontificated at length about all that he had done for the Black people in Louisiana, Wilkins made one of the more astute estimates of Huey ever made by a contemporary:

My guess is that Huey is a hard, ambitious, practical politician. He is far shrewder than he is given credit for. My further guess is that he wouldn't hesitate to throw Negroes to the wolves if it became necessary; neither would he hesitate to carry them along if the good they did him was greater than the harm.

### Conclusions

With the passing of time, historians have become much kinder to Huey Long. In his own day he enjoyed a reputation as a demagogue at best, and the accepted analysis of most liberals and leftists was that he was a precursor to American fascist rule.

That period in history both excited liberal historians and terrified them. With the stabilization of social democratic rule over four decades, liberals have become less inclined to concede that fascism was ever a viable movement. The publication of T. Harry Williams' unabashed apologia, *Huey Long*, signalled the beginning of a full-scale rehabilitation of the Kingfish.

But apart from the aggravation of bourgeois revisions of history, the danger of this resurrection is its tendency to obscure how fascism develops organically out of the so-

cial conditions and needs of capital in crisis.

Huey was an evasive creature, like the mysterious chameleon that inhabits the bayou state, a creature that appears to different people as different things. To understand U.S. fascism we have to appreciate how it is an historical product, reflecting the contradictions of national capital's development.

Huey embraced populism for the same reason Hitler embraced socialism: these facades were preconditions for their success among a people steeped in either political tradition. His early experiences as political boss and small-time machine politician were the only avenues for fascism in the philistine political world of Louisiana. His relationship to the traditional left and right was ambivalent, with both groupings vascillating between claiming him and battling him. The impact of

Long's movement on the national government is particularly telling, with Roosevelt's constant maneuvering to co-opt or eliminate the Long threat.

The more we come to understand the flexibility of the fascist movement, how it unfolds itself in the course of its battle for power and independence, the closer we will be to exposing and defeating it.

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Long in 1935 outside United States Senate Office Building

# Correspondence

Dear Editors:

Noel Ignatin's "Comments" regarding the Theses on Fascism in *Urgent Tasks* Number 13 were generally helpful. However, in my opinion, in his few brief remarks about anti-Semitism, his analysis is headed in the wrong direction. I believe he misplaces the role of anti-Semitism in Nazi ideology, and to the extent he makes an estimate of likely events in the United States he is also wrong.

Before I begin my argument, I would like to state an assumption that might otherwise go unstated. I assume that the fascists, and in particular the Nazis, have an ideology that is of major consequence to their organizing efforts. That is not to say that they don't argue amongst themselves about this or that political position, or that they don't on occasion make changes in their general "stance." In this regard they are not too different from Marxists. I do believe that the various descriptions of the fascist movement as a movement without an ideology, primarily by bourgeois commentators, are wrong. Therefore I assume that a discussion of fascist ideology is, or should be, of concern to Marxists and other anti-fascists.

It is more than coincidence that the Nazi variant of fascism has been adopted and adapted by the fascist movement in the U.S. Nazism, more than Italian, Spanish, or Bulgarian fascism, places race politics at its core. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler wrote, "The racial question gives the key not only to world history, but to all human culture. . . ." This theme was sounded again and again by the Nazis. In a speech before German lawyers, Helmut Nicolai, the man in charge of drafting Nazi legislation, said, "When we utter the word 'race' we are sounding the *leitmotiv* of National Socialism and of the National Socialist state." [Quoted in Davidowicz, *The War Against the Jews*.] The volkist state, lebensraum, etc. were all terms with definitions based on race. The Nazis understand history as a biological struggle and social problems as the result of unhygienic races. Our new Nazis even differentiate among white people on the basis of "racial health," and they have developed a theory of the "degenerate white." In *The Turner Diaries*, the widely distributed Nazi-Klan strategy novel, it is the whites who are hanged publicly as "race defilers" and "race betrayers." This is done as part of the process of "cleansing" the white race, as well as part of the process of political terror that is part of fascist politics. Remember that Zyklon B, the gas used as a mass killer by the Nazis, was perfected first in its use on Germans from mental institutions.

The anti-Semitism of the Nazis, both the old German ones in black shirts and the new American ones in white sheets, is a determining part of their overall

racist world-view.

Noel says, "Conditions in Germany and elsewhere were such that fascism could only come to power in coalition with a sector of the bourgeoisie. In that fact lies the explanation for the vital role of anti-Semitism in the fascist ideology. . . . Anti-Semitism serves the same purpose here that it did in Germany. . . . To the extent that fascism establishes its independence from the bourgeoisie as a whole, to that extent it will diminish in importance . . . although since it has developed a life of its own, it may well continue. . . ."

It wasn't *finally* decided that the Nazis needed a sector of the bourgeoisie until either right before or right after they came to power. While there may be some dispute about the exact date of their decision, there can be no dispute about the fact that anti-Semitism had played a central role in the movement from its earliest days. Anti-Semitism had a much lower NSDAP card number than Hitler's first industrialist recruit. Even that faction of the Nazis which was most "independent of the bourgeoisie as a whole," the Strasserites, understood and believed in the determinant character of anti-Semitism. This item is of more than just historical concern. The British National Front, one of the factions to emerge from the split among British fascists a few years back, is "Strasserite." In fact, other British fascists are busy attacking the NF for preaching "class war." The NF faction's "independence" has not made it any less anti-Semitic.

It is true, as Noel states, that anti-Semitism was a central ingredient in German nationalism, although my own understanding is that this had more to do with Napoleon and France emancipating European Jewry with their conquering armies, and less to do with the role of Jewish capital, as in Poland. This "mass" anti-Semitism was a fertile field for the Nazis. However, the Nazis translated this pillar of German nationalism into their own pillar of Aryan internationalism.

In the United States, anti-Semitism has played virtually no part in the formation of the nation, nationalism, and the nation-state. Racism towards people of color, on the other hand, has been central. However, our Nazis have married U.S. white racism to Aryan internationalism in something of the same fashion as the German Nazis. Indeed, the subtitle for Don Black's Knights of the Ku Klux Klan *White Patriot* paper is "World-Wide Voice of the Aryan People." The National Alliance, a significant neo-Nazi formation, believes the Soviet Union deserves favorable coverage based on Stalin making a transition from "Jewish-Bolshevism" to "Russian [read "white" — author.] nationalism." It was on just such a racial basis that the National Alliance backed Gen. Jaruzel-

ski in Poland against Solidarity and its "Jewish advisors." There are many other examples, each instructive of one aspect or another of the Klan-Nazi world-view. Nazi anti-Semitism, both now and historically, is the result of the Nazi racial-biological determinist ideology. Jews are regarded as destroyers and corrupters of the Aryan people. Jewish capital is regarded as one front of the Jewish attack, the other being Jewish Bolshevism. It is quite possible to find most or even all of the capitalists under attack by the Nazis ("the entire bourgeoisie") and still find the Nazis regarding their struggle as anti-Semitic. Capital and capitalism are simply regarded as Jewish creations and clearly non-Jewish capitalists are regarded as their pawns. It is not only possible but *necessary* — for the Nazis' anti-capitalism, like everything else, is a function of their racialism. In this case the racialism means anti-Semitism. My logical inference is that the Nazis' revolutionary anti-capitalism stems from their anti-Semitism. Noel argues that the reverse is true, that the greater the anti-capitalism the less the anti-Semitism.

During the Middle Ages, anti-Semitism existed as a mix of theological pap and folk myths. I believe Hannah Arendt quite ably demonstrates the transition of religious anti-Semitism into political anti-Semitism at the end of the 19th century. The Nazis, as I have argued above, took this political anti-Semitism and made it, like every other political phenomenon, a racial anti-Semitism.

But doesn't my whole analysis collapse under the fact that European and European-descended Jews are *white*? Isn't it possible that in this country, where the central dynamic involves the conflict between white people and people of color, the fascists will drop their anti-Semitism? Some may argue that even if one accepts my analysis of the biological determinist character of Nazi ideology, anti-Semitism is not an inherently necessary part of that ideology. Some may argue that it is not necessary to defend Noel's thesis on the role of anti-Semitism in Germany in order to criticize my position: Simply put, Jews are white, and if we want to understand the Nazis, we have to look beyond what they are actually saying.

I have never argued that the Nazis are correct. I have only argued what they are likely to think and do, based on what they think and do.

By any strictly biological definition, the Jewish people do not constitute a race. There are light-skinned Jews and dark-skinned Jews. There are European and Asiatic, Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews. Even among the light-skinned Jews of Europe, their blood serology closely resembles that of their neighboring populations. A random sampling of Jews living in New York City at the turn of the century showed a great diversity in the cephalic index, the most common fable for Jewish identification. [Survey found in Abram, *The Jewish Question*.] In *Race* by John R.

Baker, a book published by Oxford University Press and distributed by a number of the neo-Nazi and Klan organizations, the author concludes after a "scientific" consideration of Jewish taxonomy that Jews are not a race. Similarly, Wilmot Robertson, a leading fascist theoretician, begins his discussion of the Jewish people in *The Dispossessed Majority* by stating that by any strictly racial criteria, Jews are an unassimilable European minority.

Any correct identification of the Jewish people or individuals should be based on some social category, i.e., religious, ethnic, national, etc. But it is the hallmark of fascist ideology to translate social categories of modern capitalism into biological categories

National Alliance member William Simpson, in his book *Which Way Western Man?*, after recognizing some of the arguments stated above, concludes quite the contrary: ". . . the Jews are not only a religious community but, even before Israel was launched in Palestine and when they possessed no homeland of their own, nevertheless did in fact constitute a nation and a race. To meet the recognized realities of genetics and of history, as well as for all practical purposes, there seems to be no other acceptable answer." In other words, if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and smells like a duck, it must be a duck. This is the essence of the fascist position on race and the Jewish people. Scientific veracity is no clue to fascist reality. Henry Ford said more than 50 years ago that all the Jews had to do to prove that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was a Czarist forgery was to stop acting as if they were true.

But the fact that the Nazis have transformed social and biological categories should surprise no one on familiar with the pages of this magazine. In the U.S. race is not a biological category but a social one. This is clearly seen in the case of the relationship between white people and Black people. (Anyone interested should read almost any of the myriad writings published by STO on white supremacy.)

As an aside, I believe it is this point of intersection between bourgeois and fascist ideology which provides the most explosive potential for the fascists. For example, it is but a short step from the bourgeois identity of crime with Black people to the fascist identification of crime with uneugenic races. The difference, of course, is that the fascists don't call for a social solution like prisons, they want a genetic solution — genocide. I believe that an investigation of the relationship between fascism and capitalism conducted along these lines will prove to be much more useful than the usual vulgar Marxist nonsense about "finance capital," etc.

Although there is not yet a mass anti-Semitic movement in the U.S., there is a large potential for one. Father Coughlin and the rest of the band of anti-Semites from the 1930s had millions of followers. The Nazis and Klans have already been able to add a

special anti-Jewish twist to their understanding of Black people. All of the traditional Jewish conspiracy theories are busily being dusted off and tried on for size. In addition, new and innovative anti-Jewish politics are being developed. Christian patriotism and survivalism, which are fast approaching mass proportions, all contain anti-Semitic principles as part of their basic premises. A discussion of the outlines of this current anti-Semitic attack is beyond this letter. Suffice it to say that I believe the success of the anti-Semitic enterprise lies with the success of the fascist enterprise as a whole. I don't believe any of us would be devoting this much time and resources to a discussion of fascism and anti-fascism if the times did not demand it.

*Ignatin replies:*

[The author of the above piece] demonstrates that anti-Semitism was and remains a crucial element of the Nazi world outlook and program. His point is indisputable: fortunately for my argument, it is not the point at issue between us, which is an estimate of the likely part to be played by anti-Semitism in the development of a fascist movement in the United States.

[The author's] argument assumes the impossibility of the emergence among the fascists of a racialist ideology which does not lay great stress on anti-Semitism. What is the basis for this assumption? According to [the author], it is the historically determined ideology of Nazism, which gives a central place to anti-Semitism. The argument is circular.

The "Aryan" supremacy claims made by certain voices of fascism notwithstanding, fascists here will be forced to play down this element of their ideology if they hope to attract support among U.S. workers of Slavic and Mediterranean extraction. Can they similarly modify their attitude towards Jews — not necessarily dropping their anti-Semitism entirely, merely dropping it as an important mobilizing myth? In my article I cited one condition that would lead the fascists to do so: the achievement on their part of a relatively great deal of independence from the bourgeoisie as a whole, thereby eliminating the need for a mythical ruling class to substitute for the real one as a target for their attacks. Here I add a second condition: the diminution, among U.S. Jews, of the democratic and humanitarian sentiments that have traditionally distinguished them among the white population. Signs of this unfortunate assimilation of prevailing attitudes began to appear with the rise of the "crime in the streets" hysteria; its extent has recently been starkly revealed in the nearly unanimous support given by organized Jewry to Israel's latest atrocities in the Middle East.

†



## Fighting the Klan

FIGHTING THE NEW KU KLUX KLAN / NAZI THREAT

By Ken Lawrence

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3. STO's Theory of White Supremacy
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