

# CONFRONTING FASCISMI



DISCUSSION DOCUMENTS  
FOR A MILITANT MOVEMENT

# **Contents**

[Introduction](#)

[Fascism & Anti-Fascism](#)

[The Shock Of Recognition:](#)

[Looking at Hamerquist's Fascism & Anti-Fascism](#)

[Notes on the Battle of York](#)

[Revolutionary Anti-Fascism: Some Strategic Questions](#)

[About Kersplebedeb Publishing](#)

[More E-Books from Kersplebedeb](#)

**CONFRONTING FASCISM**  
**DISCUSSION DOCUMENTS FOR A MILITANT MOVEMENT**

*Don Hamerquist, J. Sakai, Anti-Racist Action Chicago, Mark Salotte*

Confronting Fascism: Discussion Documents for a Militant Movement

ISBN 978-1-894946-54-4

Paperback edition published 2002

FIRST KINDLE EDITION 2013

Kersplebedeb Publishing

CP 63560

CCCP Van Horne

Montreal, Quebec

Canada

H3W 3H8

[info@kersplebedeb.com](mailto:info@kersplebedeb.com)

[www.kersplebedeb.com](http://www.kersplebedeb.com)

If you found the ideas in this book interesting, you may also find the [Three Way Fight](#) blog of use.

# Introduction

*by Xtn of Chicago ARA*

For North American radicals the change of the century was marked not by New Year's Eve celebrations but in fireworks of a totally different kind—N30 (Nov. 30, 1999, in Seattle) and 9/11 (Sept. 11, 2001, in D.C. and New York). The first opened up an entire range of new and energizing possibilities. It heralded in an era of mass street protest unseen by most of us. It exposed the weakness of capitalist power and hegemony and was enough to make us feel that anything was possible. The second brought entirely new elements into the picture. We were not the only enemy of the capitalist order, and this new enemy was no friend of liberation. Post-Seattle, the new street protest movement developed and even accelerated at a pace that politicized thousands—but there were growing problems. With 9/11 the Seattle spirit melted into confusion and disarray.

Out of this energy and confusion comes this little book. It's an attempt to look at this new era of political action and thought, focusing on an area that we see as extremely important, relevant and perhaps at the core to what's in the air today—fascism. You are holding in your hands our attempt to begin a different and more serious discussion of fascism, what is it, of the relationship of fascism to capitalism, and of the elements of a strategy with the potential to defeat both. The essays presented here should be taken as part of an ongoing, evolving talk within the movement—with the emphasis on “ongoing.” Unlike many publications and political statements that try to be the authoritative “final word” on the subject, the documents here are meant to raise more questions than they necessarily answer. They're about jump-starting our minds and removing any blinders, allowing us to see things as we haven't seen them before.

For us, the most important aspect of these essays is that they take fascism seriously as a force/ideology/movement/tendency. They point out that fascism isn't just connected to dusty history books in the back of the university library but that it is present in some of the most important events in political history, both in the past and in what's going on today.

The actual genesis of these essays lies in the period right before N30. Anti-fascist activity was heating up in the U.S. Midwest, directed primarily against the neo-nazi organization called the World Church of Creator (WCOTC). As the actions intensified, questions started emerging—as did differences. A Chicago, Illinois, chapter of Anti-Racist Action (ARA) had initiated a campaign to shut down a series of public meetings planned by WCOTC leader Matt Hale. The campaign started by ARA eventually made it difficult and even impossible for Hale and his organization to rally, let alone go out in public, without a challenge—politically as well as physically.

During this time, the Battle of Seattle grabbed everyone's attention and made us sit up. Images of thousands of protesters clogging the streets of downtown Seattle were broadcast on every television across the world—so too were scenes of the Black Bloc and the attacks on capitalist property and police. Newspapers were scrambling for info on the new street militants and their ideology of anarchism. And debate started to rage

in the radical press. The Black Bloc was seen by some as wrong-headed youth interested only in adventurism. Sometimes the Black Bloc was condemned outright and treated as criminal—an attitude that rolled in from the established Left. During the riots, liberal and leftist do-gooders actually tried to defend capitalist property from the anarchists. In several instances, avowed “pacifists” attacked the Black Bloc in an effort to protect places like the Gap and Starbucks.

The actions by the Black Bloc and anarchists turned traditional politics on its head. This black-clad voice in the protest movement wasn’t content to beg the politicians and capitalists for reforms. The Black Bloc symbolized a new generation of activists wanting nothing short of revolution.

The ranks of the Black Bloc were comprised of many activists who had actually cut their teeth fighting nazis and Klan groups. ARA groups quickly defended the Seattle Black Bloc, seeing a similarity in tactics and motivation—and also in the way that militant antifascism had suffered from denunciations by the established left and liberal reformists. It was important for us to acknowledge and embrace this break with past thinking and action. But ARA activists were also becoming aware of other tendencies riding on the waves of the protests.

“Anti-globalization” was an amorphous concept that was defined at its lowest denominator as a mass challenge to the control and influence of international corporations. This movement was a political free-for-all that gave room to a wide range of ideological tendencies from left to right—including fascists. As the Seattle streets were lighting up in the flames of protest, just an hour to the north Matt Hale was visiting Washington State to participate in a remembrance ceremony for Robert Matthews, the slain leader of the neo-nazi paramilitary organization, the Order. Hale praised the demonstrations in Seattle and in particular hailed the young rioters as heroes. He chastised the right-wing establishment for being do-nothings and reformist and said that the fascist movement could take lessons from the militant tactics of the demonstrators and Black Bloc. The anti-fascist and anarchist movement now saw that this anti-globalization movement was not a single homogenous block. It was not only the reformist left and its ultimate subservience to the state that had to be challenged—the racist and fascist elements that would continue to insert themselves into the mix had to be exposed and beat back.

From N30 onward, global protest politics were characterized by a willingness to fight back and break the law. Even more passive, non-violent demonstrators showed an unprecedented determination in disrupting the capitalist machine. Everywhere, from the big cities to little country towns, radical anti-capitalist and anarchist actions, graffiti and groups started to emerge. For those who couldn’t be in Seattle, the next big demo was prioritized. The spirit of revolt was catching everyone.

This vibe of uncompromising protest, and the awareness of a growing and vocal nazi movement, only helped to encourage anti-fascist organizing. The WCOTC, one of the fastest growing and most dynamic of nazi groups, was facing opposition everywhere it tried to rally. From Indiana to New England to Hale’s hometown of Peoria, Illinois, antifa were throwing up resistance. (One time, sitting at a bar, a bunch of Midwestern antifa looked up to see hand-to-hand streetfighting between anarchist anti-racists and nazis after a WCOTC rally in Wallingford, Connecticut, courtesy of CNN.) But the increase in activity—both anti-fascist and anti-capitalist—didn’t come

without growing problems. An increase in state surveillance and repression coincided with the growth of the new movement. Antifa also faced the always-present risk of fascist counter-attacks.

At the same time, various radicals started asking whether anti-fascist organizing should be a priority for placing our energies. What was to be gained by doing anti-fascist work? Do groups like the ARA see more of a threat in nazis than what really exists? These questions demanded answers, which helped antifa to clarify our motivations and positions and provided us with a platform to argue out why we do what we do.

Hamerquist's essay was a direct response to these questions. In it he makes a strong case for why anti-fascist organizing is an essential component to the development of a genuine liberation movement. Originally shorter, the essay focused on several key points: organization and cadre building; questions of violence and challenging reformist tendencies in the movement (both antifa and revolutionary); developing a critique of the Left's historical analysis and assumptions of fascism; and looking at new, potentially anti-capitalist tendencies that may emerge from within a popular and revolutionary fascism.

As Hamerquist's essay started to circulate among a small network of anti-fascists and anarchists, it was proposed to turn it into a pamphlet and distribute it to a wider audience. Sakai, author of an essay on right-wing tendencies in the anti-globalization movement, was approached to write an introduction and critique of what Hamerquist laid out. Sakai soon discarded his initial draft when another event rocked our world—the attacks that sent the World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon up in flames.

9/11 had a profound effect on the political climate and quickly sent the new era of dissent and protest into disarray. Some within the anti-globalization and anti-capitalist movement attempted to maintain the energy of the previous two years, but overall the movement here in the U.S. was sapped of its potency. After a while, even the anti-war momentum came to a standstill. Today, there is still bombing in Afghanistan killing hundreds. Where's the anti-war activity? Where's the outrage? 9/11 was the biggest silencer of the growing anti-capitalist movement that the capitalists could have prayed for. Why is that?

The anti-fascist movement also had to deal with this new climate. Pre-9/11, antifa had continued to merge into the anti-globalization movement, with many participating in the quickly emerging—and explicitly revolutionary—anti-capitalist wing, often taking leading roles in planning and actions. From the protests against the Trans-Atlantic Business Dialogue in Cincinnati, Ohio, to the Black Bloc at the A16 anti-IMF/World Bank meeting in D.C., hundreds of antifa and ARA activists joined in and became a visible presence. The radical anti-racist voice these activists brought had previously been non-existent in any noticeable organized expression. This trend continued into the Quebec City anti-FTAA actions and was also massively present when European antifa marched in Prague and Gottenburg. Antifa worldwide became important players in the new movement, organizing as a block against reactionary politics and fascist attempts to join the protests. But once the airliners-turned-cruise missiles blasted their way into global consciousness, anti-fascists and revolutionaries had to deal with the rapidly changing landscape. We could not ignore the unfolding war, roundups and political repression, but we were not ready for them.

Anti-fascists attempted to analyze the attacks and who may have perpetrated them. Articles informed the movement of both the nature of fascist entities like the Taliban and what the Western capitalist response to them and similar movements would be. Antifa also took note of fascist and neo-nazi views on 9/11 and its effect. Many of the U.S. fascist groups were strategizing on how to take advantage of the mass hysteria that immediately sprang up and were looking to use the loss of security that was present as a way to insert themselves into the picture. In an immediate climate that had mobs of people attacking Arabs, Asians and other people of color perceived as “outsiders” to America, the fascists worked to promote these hostilities and fears. The immediate after-effects of 9/11 were very, very ugly. Those who tried to speak out against the war and the rampant racism were beat up and threatened. Mosques were burned down, gas attendants were attacked with machetes and businesses were shot up. All hell seemed to have broken loose. And the fascist movement now had a perfect opportunity to build itself.

This takes us back to this little publication. In these essays, the authors both discuss the dynamics of fascism and the potentially revolutionary impulses behind it. Fascism is no friend of humanity, and when they call fascism “revolutionary” they don’t mean “progressive” or “liberatory.” Fascism has a revolutionary component because it is about a complete re-shaping of modern society, transforming how we look and deal with one another, who has power and who doesn’t and who’s going to get ethnically cleansed. The essays also point out that fascism will be based in mass support—it has to be. Fascism is not a room full of capitalist bosses or lackeys saying, “Ok, we’re gonna institute fascism now.” No, fascism is a movement made up of lots and lots of disgruntled people. And if we are to be successful in fighting fascism, then this is where we have to begin.

Our strategy must be about popularizing our ideas and engaging in struggles that open up conflict with state and capitalist interests. We need to see where the political fissures exist and figure out how to intervene in ways that crack them open even further. But what is our strategy? And what are the politics and ideas that provide the basis for our approach?

Fascism gains ground when a popular upsurge of people decide it’s time for a change and head down the path that leads away from a liberatory, multi-ethnic vision of freedom. How do we gain ground in the post-Seattle, post-9/11 age, when the political climate is slanted against us?

These essays help highlight the continuing problems faced by both the revolutionary and still-embryonic anti-fascist movements. Despite important leaps, overlappings and mergings between these two currents, they often continue to exist in separate worlds. It’s important that we outline some of the problems we see with these two camps.

All too often, the militant anti-racist and antifa scenes lack a coherent or even pronounced revolutionary outlook. We could even say that a large portion of it fluctuates between revolutionary politics and social-democratic positions, ending up with a type of militant reformism. Antifa are willing to fight, without hesitation, and have built up an independent culture that emphasizes self-activity: planning actions, building a base of support through music and publishing, being present whenever nazi or racist activity shoots up, and being permeated with a general anti-authoritarianism.

These are all-important aspects that need to be cultivated. The majority of the antifa movement, however, especially in the U.S., lacks a coherent critique of capitalism and the state. Some anti-fascist organizing even consciously stops short of promoting revolutionary social change, thinking that capitalism and its ills are here to stay. These antifa argue that we need to focus on beating the nazis off the street instead, and maybe in the process we'll gain a little bit of breathing room under the weight of this racist, patriarchal and thoroughly repressive society. But ultimately this is a defeatist politic that can lead antifa to embrace aspects of the law and order regime, even looking towards the state as a potential ally in some instances. This has to be challenged and defeated. As antifa, we have come a long way through the politicization and momentum of the last few years our politics are now more radical than ever. But it's still not sufficient.

On the other hand, there is a tendency in the revolutionary movement to ignore fascism and treat it as a shadow on the wall. Many revs believe real fascism died in 1945 and is now a non-issue. Some revs go further, believing that antifa actually assist the state by diverting energy away from anti-capitalist struggle and that by struggling against the state and capital we automatically fight fascism and its potential. This logic sees only two forces in society: the bosses and us. It fails to grasp the complexities of class struggle, racism and the levels of privilege and power that are present and are held onto by those who have them. It also fails to see the antagonism between the state and the will of a popular, yet reactionary, movement. Another problem is that the revolutionary movement, by not incorporating anti-fascism into its program, may unwittingly embrace reactionary, racist and even fascist aspects of popular struggles—and not even know it. Or worse, they may try to deny it while being fully aware of the slippery slope they are playing on. Revolutionaries need to develop a more complex analysis and, to be blunt, dump workerist notions that there exists a united proletariat against the bosses. The history of U.S. politics alone can show the fallacy of this approach. White supremacy and white skin privilege long ago created differences in the working classes. Different strata of the oppressed have unique and different class interests. And 9/11 showed that there are forces outside of the dominant boss class who have an agenda that isn't pro-human or very proletarian.

A few observations (critiques you could say) that we want to lay out now are specific to the essays but should also be understood as a wider comment on our movements. First, the authors are coming out of a Marxist perspective, albeit an extremely unorthodox one. This makes for an insight into politics that is sharper and refreshingly different than the majority of the Marxist movement, and in general their perspective is uniquely different from most of the Left, period. However, they tread lightly around addressing deficiencies in Marx's/Marxist philosophy, the effects the last hundred and fifty years of organized Marxism has had and the overall failure of the Left to establish a free society. The potentials for emerging reactionary movements have to be analyzed within the context of this history and the collapse of the Soviet/Stalinist model of communism worldwide. Hamerquist and (to a greater extent) Sakai take a look into the defeat and/or degeneration of many movements, including those for national liberation. They also point out that what is left in the world today is far from the revolutionary socialist aspirations for freedom and equality that many of these movements claimed as their end goal (come on, everyone, can we say, B-a-l-k-a-

n-s?). Marxism—and the whole of the Left, including anarchism—must be thoroughly reviewed and critiqued if we hope to create a movement of people capable of creating something new and liberatory.

Another major weakness in these works is that they insufficiently address the condition of women in relation to capitalism and fascism. Globally, women continue to be at the bottom of the pyramid of domination. They do, however, remain decisive factors in social and cultural development. Along with children, women continue to represent the largest block of exploited humanity, both existing as proletariat and still fulfilling traditional domestic roles. One is paid the lowest in wages and the other receives no labor pay at all, thus providing the free and accumulated labor that the whole of capitalist society depends on. The providing of this free labor, or the potential for an organized women's movement to take it—and the whole of their labor—away, could become a major factor in the future and itself could undermine the capitalist structure. But these issues are also at the center of fascist ideology. In an emerging fascist culture, the traditional forms of oppressing women become exaggerated beyond the point of recognition. The patriarchal nature of fascism places women in a particular class, or sub-class. Women become mere property, dominated and exploited by a male authority.

But herein lies the contradiction. The power of ideology affects all classes and strata of society. A fascist movement will draw its strength from both men and women. Hitler's rise to power wasn't merely the work of stormtroopers in the streets, it was made possible by the mass support of women. Hitler promised the creation of a cultural value system in which the contributions of "Aryan" women to the fascist German society would simply be child rearing and care of the home and hearth. A new proletarian slave class of gypsies, Jews and North Africans—made up of men, women and children—would handle the work previously done by "Aryan" women. All sexual elements outside of conceiving for the master race would be handled by state-promoted brothels.

Looking back at these lessons, what would the role of women be in a modern fascist movement? As is the nature of society, there will be contradictions and antagonisms to ideology and its implementation. Women will play a subservient role in fascist, patriarchal politics, but they can also act as active agents in its realization. Currently, the more sophisticated fascist and neo-nazi groups in the U.S. have and promote women as organizers, on par with their male counterparts. Aided by magazines, websites and how-to courses, a subculture of fascist women supports each other and promotes female participation in fascist activism. Will women play more extensive parts within reactionary movements? What are the potential developments here? How do we organize to deal with these complexities? What are the questions to be asked and priorities needed to combat both patriarchy and fascism? The struggle between oppression and liberation for women has to be placed at the fore of our politics and action.

In closing, we need to re-assert Hamerquist's theme: that the development of an anti-fascist politic is essential to the development of a genuine liberation movement. Clearly understanding the characteristics of anti-human politics and ideologies in all their forms must be prioritized. So also must be the struggle against them. Taking the fight to fascism—whether in its white supremacist form, in a crypto-fascist

fundamentalist variety or perhaps even in forms we have yet to see—cannot be sidelined for the larger struggles, or vice versa. During the Spanish Civil, the anarchist militants fighting on the front against Franco’s troops used the slogan, “The War is not inseparable from the Revolution!” We take this to heart.

In this new era, the future is clouded with the still-shifting smoke and haze of 9/11. Our recovery process is slow going and filled with questions that seem to have no immediate answers. However, chances and steps forward can be had. What is needed is the political clarity to seize those opportunities and take those chances. We hope that these essays will assist in that respect.

**For A Free Humanity!**

**Against Fascism,**

**Against Capitalism and the State!**

## Fascism & Anti-Fascism

*by Don Hamerquist*

This paper is directed towards a narrow audience of revolutionary activists who, hopefully, will not demand a finished product. It is not finished and probably will never be. Much of what I say will be controversial and is certainly open to challenge. On some points I would not be so unhappy to be proven wrong. I realize that I make a number of generalizations without what would normally be regarded as sufficient evidence, and I haven't adequately checked some of the evidence that I do offer. Feel free to shoot down any part of the argument, but remember that on the major points, validity isn't ultimately a scholastic matter, but an issue that will be determined and "decided" in struggle. Much depends on what we, and also the fascists, do and don't do.

For much of the U.S. left, fascism is little more than an epithet—simply another way to say "bad" or "very bad" applied loosely to quite different social movements as well as to various aspects and elements of capitalist reaction. But for those with more of a "theoretical bent" fascism in essence is, and always has been, a "gorilla" form of capitalism. That is, fascism is a system of capitalist rule that would be more reactionary, more repressive, more imperialist, and more racist and genocidal than current "normality" of ruling class policy. Many of those who see fascism as essentially capitalist also minimize the extent to which it is a sharp break with "normal" forms of capitalist rule. They see it as just the extreme end of the continuum of systematized repression that characterizes late capitalism. Often this is expressed in the view that capitalism contains an inherent drive towards fascism. A trip that some believe has already been completed.

In opposition to this position, I think that fascism has the potential to become a mass movement with a substantial and genuine element of revolutionary anti-capitalism. Nothing but mistakes will result from treating it as "bad" capitalism—as, in the language of the Comintern, "the policy of the most reactionary sections of big capital".

Fascism in my opinion, is not a paper tiger or a symbolic target but a real and immediate danger both in this country and around the world. However, the nature of this danger is not self-evident. It requires clear explanation and it requires the rejection of some conventional wisdom. Fascism is not a danger because it is ruling class policy or is about to be adopted as policy. Not even because it could have major influences on this policy. Nor is it a danger because of the "rahowa", racial holy war, that is advocated by some fascist factions. The policies of official capitalism carried out through the schools and the criminal justice and welfare systems are both a far greater and a more immediate threat to the health and welfare of people of color than fascist instigated racial attacks and their promotion of racialist genocide. The real danger presented by the emerging fascist movements and organizations is that they might gain a mass following among potentially insurgent workers and declassed strata through an historic default of the left. This default is more than a possibility, it is a probability, and if it happens it will cause massive damage to the potential for a liberatory anti-

capitalist insurgency.

In this country, particularly, radical anti-fascists must be prepared to compete ideologically and every other way with fascists who present themselves as revolutionary and anti-capitalist and who orient towards the same issues and constituencies as the left. This is not to deny that capitalist reaction exists within and influences fascist movements, perhaps even decisively in some places and at some times (Eastern Europe?). However, I think that both logic and evidence supports the conclusion that this side of fascism is on the wane in this country and in many other areas of the so-called developed world.

## **HISTORY**

When fascist movements, theories, and governments emerged following WWI, the common left view was that, in essence, they were a policy of capitalist reaction intended to counter the possibility of a serious working class challenge to capital. Of course, fascism was seen as more than a normal capitalist policy option—like tight money or protectionism. It was a “policy”, but one that had relatively autonomous popular support. It was a policy, but one advanced by the most reactionary neanderthal wing of capital, while the “liberal” “progressive” wing opposed it, putting fascism at the center of major disputes within the ruling class. This position cut across the ideological spectrum, and was even expressed by major anarchist leaders; e.g., Durruti, “When the bourgeoisie sees power slipping from its grasp, it has recourse to fascism to maintain itself.”

Features of fascism that don’t fit this picture are normally ignored or dismissed as some kind of black propaganda from the ruling class. But historically these have been pretty significant features. Mussolini and Italian fascism developed out of the Italian Socialist Party and subsequently picked up some important figures from the Italian Communist party. German Nazis were national socialists and a large section of their following and some of their leadership were serious about socialism and anti-capitalism. (This is the Strasser-Brownshirt tendency that is the historical antecedent of the so-called third position, a growing factor in the current fascist movements.) Even the Hitler wing of the NSDAP was clearly anti-bourgeois.

From the early twenties it could not be denied that fascism had a mass base. However, most left analyses placed this base in competitively insecure sectors of the capitalist class; in pre-capitalist classes resisting proletarianization; and in essentially declassed elements, the lumpen, not in the working class. Any fascist influences within the working class were attributed to some extreme form of “false consciousness”, or were discounted as the effects of temporary and accidental features of capitalist development (like losing a major war) which would be eliminated by the engine of history. At the heart of fascism in this view were, on the one hand and playing the strategically decisive role, the most reactionary elements of capital, and on the other hand a street force composed of gangs of opportunistic and essentially cowardly thugs. Fascism was a club over the working class, not a tendency within it. With the notable exception of Reich’s position on the mass psychology of fascism, there was little serious examination of the actual and potential mass popular appeal of fascism.

This simplistic view of fascism was, and still is, paired with a simplistic anti-fascism. The main strand of anti-fascism was essentially social democratic. This stressed the need for a defensive popular unity against fascism premised on the general understanding that it was the policy of capitalist weakness—a final resort position for most of the ruling class. Since a complacent and comfortable capitalism would have no need to resort to fascism, the social democratic response (and the same essential positions were held by many who weren't organized social democrats) was to strengthen and stabilize “democratic” capitalism through the incorporation and institutionalization of trade unionism and the subordination of all struggle to parliamentary and legal considerations. The resulting de facto endorsement of liberal capitalism follows right along the track of social democracy's increasingly reformist and evolutionary general politics. Not surprisingly, since they shared the view that fascism was essentially a form of capitalist rule that became more attractive to the ruling class when capitalism was in a weakened position, the Communists (Third International) ultimately wound up at a place quite similar to social democracy. However, before the eventual convergence there were important differences that demarcate a second strand of anti-fascist politics, a strand which at times has been very antagonistic to the reformist position even though it shares important underlying assumptions with it.

During the so-called “third period” of the late twenties and early thirties, communist orthodoxy posed working class revolution as the answer to fascism as well as to various other inconveniences, all of which would be eliminated as the byproduct of the elimination of capitalism. (The Italian communists who had early experience with fascism in power had significantly different positions, but in conditions of emerging Stalinism, they kept pretty quiet). If this “left” anti-capitalist stance led to a temporary strengthening of fascism, that was acceptable—an attitude made famous by the German C.P. slogan, “After Hitler, Us”. A parallel communist position of the period presented social democracy and fascism as two not so different sides of the same capitalist coin. Social democrats were “social fascists”, and any strategic alliance with social democracy against fascism was excluded. In fact, there were examples of tactical alliances between Communists and Nazis against the social democrats. This is notwithstanding the well-known clashes between armed fascists and communists during this period. Clashes that are frequently exaggerated for reasons of post facto communist public relations.

Some of the positions taken in the debates about Spanish politics during the thirties follow a pattern similar to “third period” positions. Ironically these are often anarchist criticisms of the popular front governments, and particularly of the participation in these governments by the anarcho-syndicalist leadership of the CNT-FAI.

This “left” position is the second, much weaker, strand of anti-fascism. Elements of it re-emerge regularly as revolutionary groups see mainstream leftists evading confrontation with capitalist state power or even colluding with it, while undermining radical victories and potentials. All done in the name of anti-fascist and anti-right wing politics. This makes the “left” position understandable, but doesn't make it correct. At the present time such a position will lead to a serious blurring of the distinctions between the politics of a revolutionary left and those of various militant anti-capitalist

fascist tendencies.

(Some populist and anti-capitalist fascists are already promoting a position of “left-right convergence”, arguing that such historical differences are largely irrelevant and should be superceded. (See the Spartacus Press or other National Revolutionary websites for numerous examples.) On the other hand, the state and some flacks on the liberal left, are attempting to buttress the legitimacy and hegemony of capitalism by presenting a picture of a supposed “terrorist” merger of the extremes of left and right. I will deal with this “left-right” convergence issue, both as presented by some fascist tendencies and as an element in capitalist ideological hegemony, at a number of points in the course of this paper.)

Shortly after Hitler came to power, and with Nazi Germany posing an obvious military threat to the Soviet Union, the communists made the dramatic change in anti-fascist policy and theory that is associated with the name of Dimitrov and the slogan of the united/popular front. No longer would fascism be defeated through the defeat of capitalism. Now, the policy was to defeat fascism by saving capitalism from its own fascist potentials and propensities. This would be accomplished by developing the broadest possible popular alliance—even broader than that envisaged by orthodox social democrats—around the defense of bourgeois liberty and bourgeois parliamentarianism. This period of the united/popular front against fascism lasted through the military defeat of Germany and Italy except for the brief, but historically very significant, reversion to a corrupt and hypocritical variant of the third period positions during the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939-40.

After the defeat of fascism in power in WWII, the Communist policy morphed into the familiar pseudo-strategy of anti-monopoly coalitions and anti-monopoly governments; focusing against the “ultra right” and relying on alliances with “democratic” and “progressive” sectors of capital for “peace, democratic rights, and economic progress”. Hidden in the dialectical wastebasket is the classic Marxist tenet of bourgeois democracy being the preferred form of capitalist rule. The net result was, and still is, institutionalized support for a never-ending succession of capitalist lesser evils. Frequently this involves de facto support for the policies and positions advanced by the sector of capital that actually controls the main levers of state power. One of the more familiar examples of this approach in action in this country, was the support of both social democracy and the CPUSA for “peace candidate”, Lyndon Johnson, against Goldwater in 1964, an historical moment when a challenge to all capitalist policy options was clearly developing momentum.

Insofar as there is thinking here, the underlying thought is this: first, fascism, rather than being a unique and specific danger, the policy of capital’s extremity forced on it by its weakness in the face of adversity, becomes the permanent project of a “bad”, “reactionary”, “warlike”, “ultra right” sector of capital. Bourgeois democracy; parliamentarism, constitutionalism, legalization of trade unions, rather than being a double-edged collection of questionable “people’s victories”, become the best possible terrain for waging popular struggle against capital, a neutral ground that must be defended against the “ultra-rightists” and fascists who would obliterate it. It would be possible to spend a lot of time on the history of these positions, and on various examples of their implementation, but for purposes of my argument there are two central points. Fascism was capitalism, but of a “bad”, gorilla variant. Anti-fascism

was either confined to the terrain of reformism or collapsed into the general struggle against capital. In the rest of this paper I hope to demonstrate what's wrong with the first point, and to develop an alternative to the second.

## **CRISIS?**

The way we estimate the shape and the prospects of the incipient fascist movement in this country has a lot to do with our estimates of the prospects for capitalism. If we project a period of relative stability and balanced development, capitalist hegemony, particularly in the metropolitan center, can be maintained through ostensibly neutral mechanisms which hide the realities of domination and subordination. This will keep fascist movements (and likely the left as well) on the margins of society. If, on the contrary, capitalism is entering a period of major social and economic dislocation, a period of crises, the growth of the left, and, as well, the growth of fascist movements will be both a manifestation of the crises and a reaction to them.

There are good reasons why fashionable leftism no longer revolves around conceptions of capitalist crisis. We can remember the theories of "general crisis" and its various "stages". The predictions of the "final crisis" and of the collapse of the capitalist world system. We also should know what actually collapsed. There's certainly nothing wrong with delivering some kicks to Soviet "Marxism"'s simplistic economic determinism, but it shouldn't extend to accepting capitalism's unlimited flexibility by default, preventing serious discussion of the system's limits. While I don't directly argue the issues of capitalist crisis in this paper, I realize that the points that I do make imply a definite position that can certainly be challenged. Be that as it may, I think that capitalism, although superficially reascendent, contains defining and ultimately terminal internal contradictions. Of course these don't preordain a dismal capitalist future, or even necessarily give us the capacity to make specific predictions about this future. They do make it proper, even prudent, to assume a capitalist system that is crisis prone and crisis ridden. Carefully read, serious Marxism does not claim that capitalism will inevitably collapse or that it will be inevitably succeeded by communism. It claims that: "Capital itself is the moving contradiction, (in) that it presses to reduce labour time to a minimum, while it posits labour time, on the other side, as sole measure and source of wealth. Hence it diminishes labour time in the necessary form so as to increase it in the superfluous form; hence posits the superfluous in growing measure as a condition—question of life or death—for the necessary. On the one side, then, it calls to life all the powers of science and of nature, as of social combination and of social intercourse, in order to make the creation of wealth independent (relatively) of the labour time employed on it. On the other side, it wants to use labour time as the measuring rod for the giant social forces thereby created, and to confine them within the limits required to maintain the already created value as value. Forces of production and social relations—two different sides of the development of the social individual—appear to capital as mere means, and are merely means for it to produce on its limited foundation. In fact however, they are the material conditions to blow this foundation sky-high." (Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 706)

This "crisis in the law of value" is the reality that underlies the distortions and absurdities currently characterizing global capitalism. It is the stuff of the ecological

crises, and of the marginalization of labor as well. It ties opulence to famine; medical marvels to epidemics; tremendous productivity to meaningless drudgery. This crisis does raise specters, but not only that of communism. Marx was aware of a different possible future one that also is a specter, the specter of “barbarism”—of the “common ruin of the contending classes”. Capitalism’s current contradictions provide the potentials for revolutionary fascist movements, the basic ingredient, I think, of “barbarism”, just as certainly as they provide potentials for a revitalized revolutionary left. It is not ordained that it will be a revolution from the left rather than an attack from the right that will “blow this foundation sky-high”. Indeed, if we listen to T. Kazynski, and other less exotic advocates of deindustrialization, capitalist collapse might result from processes that reflect neither left nor right goals or visions. This is why some very diverse political tendencies subordinate all issues to the preparation for survival in a post-collapse era.

There is no doubt that in response to these developing crises some elements of resurgent fascism will ally with capitalist reaction. But in my opinion these are unlikely to be the decisive and defining elements in this country.

Let’s look at this as two different, though closely related, questions. First, is there a potential that a strategically significant section of U.S. capital would opt for a fascist state? Second, even without such a ruling class support, might a pro-capitalist variant of fascism gain hegemony over the various elements of right wing reaction and shape it into a unified mass movement that could impose fascism on the capitalist ruling class as well as the rest of society.

I want to focus on the first point in this section. However, the second point cannot necessarily be ruled out, so in a later section I will deal with the potentials of a mass pro-capitalist fascist movement without important links to any major sectors of the ruling class.

Obviously, if an important section of capital opts for fascism, it will have a major impact on the politics and the potentials of fascist mass movements. Even as it enjoyed greater visibility and more material resources, the cohesion and coherence of the overall fascist movement would be weakened by the defection of more radical and militant fascist positions. Its path towards power would orient towards coups and putsches and away from popular insurgency. To varying degrees, this is what happened in the processes of the victories of fascism in Germany, Italy and Spain.

However, we face conditions that are different in major ways from Germany of the twenties and from most other historical situations where fascism gained a mass following and challenged for state power. Germany after WWI was a defeated and humiliated nation with a politically and economically shackled capitalist class. In Germany, accurately or not, the left anti-capitalist revolutionary potential certainly looked real and substantial—sufficiently substantial to force a reactionary unity on a capitalist class that was in no position to respond to the working class insurgencies with substantial pre-emptive concessions. Similarly, in Italy in the early twenties, and in Spain slightly later, a large and militant anarchist and socialist upsurge faced a weak and poorly developed capitalist class that could reasonably conclude that it needed to rely on the fascist card. In these conditions a significant sector of the ruling class did develop an interest in imposing a fascism “from above”, developing a relationship with those sectors of the autonomous fascist mass movement that were not genuinely

committed to the more radical aspects of the fascist program. Despite this, even in Germany, the nazi political structure had a clear and substantial autonomy from the capitalist class and the strength to impose certain positions on that class. German national socialism was never just a tool of the entire ruling class, or even of a reactionary sector of it. When this has been recognized by the left, it has usually been viewed as something of a “bonapartist” situation, which, though important for historical moments, is always eventually outweighed and overwhelmed by the realities of class interests. Indeed, it is believed that exactly this triumph of ruling class interests occurred in Germany when Hitler crushed the fascist left wing in 1934 and made a compact with German capitalism. A parallel argument applies to Mussolini’s accommodation with the Vatican and Italian capitalism.

The German left communist, Alfred Sohn-Rethel, infiltrated the top circles of the German Association of Manufacturers and much later wrote a book with an on the spot description of the actual relationships between the nazi movement and party and various capitalist groupings. His book makes it clear that the nazis had substantial independence from the capitalist class even after the pro-capitalist right wing coup in the German fascist movement. This independence, according to Sohn-Rethel, went beyond bonapartism. He thought that the German fascist state and society were developing features that foreshadowed a new “transcapitalist” exploitative social order.

The most important of these features was fascist labor policy where, in significant areas of the economy the distinctively capitalist difference between labor and other factors of production was obliterated. Labor, not just labor power, was consumed in the process of production just like raw materials and fixed capital. The implications are barbaric and genocidal and genocide was what occurred. But this was not the genocidal aspect of continuing primitive accumulation that is a part of “normal” capitalist development. That type of genocide is directed mainly against pre-capitalist populations and against the social formations that obstruct the creation of a modern working class and the development of a reservoir of surplus labor. The German policy was the genocidal obliteration of already developed sections of the European working classes and the deliberate disruption of the social reproduction of labor in those sectors—all in the interests of a racialist demand for “living space”.

There is no significant parallel between our situation and the conditions in which German, Spanish, and Italian fascism developed. U.S. centered capital is triumphant on a global scale, not defeated and disorganized. Its main concern is to avoid unnecessary disruptions to its hegemony, and if it were to support the fascist option, particularly in this country, it would obviously be just such a disruption. We might hope differently, but no significant internal or external challenges from the left are pushing U.S.-centered capitalism towards such acts of desperation. Some more or less marginalized sections of the ruling class (e.g. Millikin?) might develop ties to fascist movements and provide resources that could help coalesce a reactionary right bloc. However, this would only happen at the cost of diluting and undermining the militance and radicalism of the fascist constituency, channeling it into reformist and parliamentary arenas where it will have difficulty moving beyond pressure group status. We can hope that the fascists will be as blind to the dangers of this course as much of the left certainly is, but, as I will show in the course of this paper, we had

better not depend on it.

## **NATURE OF FASCIST DANGER**

It is easy for U.S. anti-fascists to be lulled into complacency because of the historic stupidities and religiosity of fascist groupings in this country. But fascists who can think are emerging, and as they do, there will be a base for their kind of thinking. The emerging fascist movement for which we must prepare, will be rooted in populist nationalist anti-capitalism and will have an intransigent hostility to various state and supra-state institutions. The essence of anti-fascist organizing must be the development of a left bloc that can successfully compete with such fascists, presenting a revolutionary option that confronts both fascism and capitalism in the realm of ideas and on the street. As I have said, unless the left can become such an alternative, there is a real danger that fascist movements will be the main beneficiary of capital's developing contradictions. It would be convenient if, for lack of an alternative, large numbers of people would automatically rally behind the left's various tattered flags wherever they got basically pissed off. However, in a crisis there will be alternatives to the left—fascist ones, and the left may very well not look like much of an alternative to capitalism. Sadly it will not only be hard to distinguish the U.S. left from various liberal capitalist factions, the lines between it and some of the fascists are also likely to be pretty indistinct.

Nevertheless, most of the U.S. left operates on the unstated assumption that in any competition with fascists for popular support we win by default. When the secondary issues underlying this assumption are eliminated, two main grounds for it remain. The first is the belief that all of the significant fascists will eventually expose themselves as pro-capitalist. The second is the belief that fascism is inevitably white supremacist. I want to deal with the elements of this assumption separately and at some length. Of course, this separation is for purposes of discussion only. In reality white supremacy and support for capitalism are normally linked. In this country, white supremacy has been a central factor in capitalist social control, and it is certain that any white fascist movement in the U.S. that was not categorically opposed to capitalism would be white supremacist.

People are not stupid and unable to see political reality. To the contrary, they are smart and see the truth more clearly than the left. This extends beyond the popular view that leftists are just another species of politician to a basic skepticism about the left's vision of the revolutionary alternative to capitalism. Don't forget that the left is saddled in the popular consciousness with the Soviet and Chinese models (for some a treasured burden). These models look a great deal like fascism to the average person. They look a lot like fascism to many fascists, old and new. Wasn't it Mussolini who said that Stalinist U.S.S.R. was "fascism without a market"?

There will be no widespread popular confidence that those who identify with the currently non-existent "actually existing socialism" in any of its phases and permutations are reliable anti-fascists or that they should be entrusted with power under any circumstances. Nor should there be. The truth is that many left groups function like fascists—organizing themselves in cultist obedience to a maximum leader and proposing models of a good society that emphasize typically fascist virtues

like discipline, loyalty, and sacrifice. Other left perspectives are just liberal reformism served with some nostalgic rhetoric. It's not at all uncommon to find both features in the same left organization.

Do we think that all of this has escaped popular notice and will have no consequences? How could that possibly be the case? It would not be difficult to preempt the terrain of discontent from this left of ours. Certainly this is more likely to happen than that all of the fascists will decide to help us out and become pro-capitalist. Let's look at this issue in more detail.

## **FASCIST ANTI-CAPITALISM**

Following fairly logically from the position that fascism is just a capitalist policy option, the U.S. left (also the British or at least the old *Searchlight* people along with their many other blemishes) has tended to view the actual fascist and neo-fascist groups as more or less of a joke. Their political positions are treated as propaganda that should not to be taken seriously, as just a cover for an opportunistic mixture of thugs, nuts, and cops that is essentially in the pay of sectors of the capitalist ruling class. Accompanying this is the terminally foolish conception of fascist cadre as cowards and bullies who will run from anyone willing to fight. Such positions should have died quietly a quarter century ago with the appearance of the *Turner Diaries* in this country. This novel, based on Jack London's *Iron Heel*, was written by William Pierce, who until his recent death was head of the fascist National Alliance and previously a major figure in George Lincoln Rockwell's Nazi group. The *Turner Diaries* is not a cartoon-Klan concoction. It elaborates a radical critique of the existing capitalist social structure and goes to some lengths to differentiate revolutionary fascists from reactionary, but reformist, right-wingers. Beyond a political perspective, the *Turner Diaries* lays out a moral and ethical framework for U.S. fascism which, whatever else can be said about it, is not opportunistic or lumpen. The left in the U.S. paid essentially no attention and, with few exceptions, drew no political conclusions. Much of it is probably still, after two decades, familiar with the *Turner Diaries* only through its mention in newspaper accounts as a major influence on Timothy McVeigh, the Order, the Posse Comitatus, the Phineas Priesthood, the World Church of the Creator, etc.

Although the *Turner Diaries* were clearly revolutionary, they make a narrow and moralistic attack on what they picture as the essential corruption of U.S. society. Pierce is not enthused about anti-capitalism. His criticisms of U.S. capitalism focus on excesses and abuses, criticizing the alleged dominance of the financial element over the productive (sic) element. William Pierce was totally aligned with the Hitler wing of the Nazi spectrum. His politics rested on a mix of anti-Semitism, white supremacy, myths of a heroic white past, and other assorted aryan garbage. His vision of an alternative society was hierarchical, authoritarian, and patriarchal. This worldview may find mass support in fundamentalist right-reactionary circles, but it has distinct limitations in popular appeal elsewhere.

Pierce's attempt to create an American variant of classical German Nazism has resulted in new fascist formations that frontally attack him and his organization, the National Alliance, for being insufficiently anti-capitalist, insufficiently militant, and