

Fascists are the Tools of the State

Peter Gelderloos

2007

1. Fascism is widespread in many industrial and postcolonial countries, existing as extreme nationalism, neo-Nazism, or some other extreme authoritarianism. In nearly all cases, the rank-and-file of the fascist movements tend to be dispossessed members of a privileged group in society (e.g. poor whites). In pre-WWII Germany, most working-class Germans were impoverished by the Depression, in contrast to their self-image as a wealthy, powerful nation. In modern Germany, neo-Nazi political parties win the most votes, often more than 10% of the total, in states where unemployment is highest. In the US, poor southern whites who do not enjoy the wealth promised to white people of the richest nation on earth often join the Ku Klux Klan. In Rwanda the Hutus, impoverished and in great need of land, expressed their desire for more wealth and power by identifying with the majority ethnicity, joining the fascist Hutu parties responsible for the genocide. There has been a similar fascist movement among Hindus in India, asserting their power as the majority ethnicity. Thus, fascism can be seen as a response to disempowerment and broken promises of privilege.
2. Fascism can also be seen as an elite phenomenon, a gentleman's movement. The German Nazi party included many of the richest industrialists, the Spanish fascists behind Franco were an alliance of generals, landowning aristocracy, and church leaders, while Mussolini said fascism should better be called "corporatism" because it is the blending of state and corporate power. In the US, the KKK was originally a gentleman's club, and before WWII, the richest industrialists (Hearst, Rockefeller, Ford, DuPont, Morgan) supported the fascists in Europe. Currently in the US, many elite conservatives support the anti-immigrant group Minutemen and other crypto-fascist groups. Fascism is especially connected to conservative segments of the elite who are afraid the expansive strategies of the progressive elite will backfire and destabilize the whole system. In these manifestations, fascism is a way the elite preserve traditional morality, strengthen social hierarchy, and defend against revolutionary activity among the lower classes.
3. The basic ideas common to fascism (a: anti-immigration, b: racial purity, c: white supremacy, d: political empowerment through nationalism, e: the social Darwinist ideas of "survival of the fittest," f: anti-Semitism) are all empty and incorrect. A: Anti-immigration is hypocrisy. The anti-immigration political parties in the US and European Union usually

supported the same free trade deals and wars (e.g. NAFTA, the civil war in El Salvador) that are the cause of much of the immigration, and their economies depend on immigrant labor (US agriculture and the construction industry would collapse overnight without immigrant labor). European governments that are supposedly worried about protecting their cultures from immigrants are often the same ones that colonized the countries from which the immigrants are coming; they had no problem bringing their culture to someone else's country, nor are they doing anything to stop the "cultural pollution" of McDonalds and MTV. B: As for racial purity, the idea has no scientific basis, and in fact race is an arbitrary generalization. There is no danger in cross-racial breeding, in fact a diverse gene pool is much healthier than a homogenous one, and no ethnic group is actually "pure." We all in fact stem from the same ancestors and have been mixing since the beginning. C: White supremacy is also a lie with no factual basis other than the crude (and fabricated) pseudoscience of skull-measuring that took place in the 19th century. D: Nationalism is a blatant lie: the political and economic elite are constantly making deals with other countries and enriching themselves while they teach their blind followers to hate people from other countries, thus dividing the lower classes. Waving the flag and loving the nation empowers the government, and this is the opposite of empowering the people. Ridiculously, nationalists believe they will be free if their jailers look the same and speak the same language as them. E: Social Darwinism — the idea of "survival of the fittest" enshrined as a political system — has nothing to do with scientific Darwinism. In fact, Darwin never used the phrase "survival of the fittest," and he found that species survive by adapting themselves to nature, not waging a war against it. In fact, humans waste their greatest evolutionary advantages — the abilities to communicate and think creatively — by conforming to strict social hierarchies that have no actual natural basis. F: As for anti-Semitism, in the Middle Ages, the same people who killed Jews also put them in the role of money lender and depended on them. In the 20th century, anti-Semitic capitalists claimed Jews were part of the "international Bolshevik conspiracy" while anti-capitalist anti-Semites said Jews were part of a conspiracy of bankers and capitalists. Clearly, fascists just use Jews to stand in wherever they need to blame someone.

4. So many fascists and neo-Nazis could not go on believing such stupid, baseless ideas unless their hatred served an important purpose. Clearly we cannot take fascist ideas seriously, but we must take fascists themselves seriously, because of all the murders, social violence, and intimidation they are responsible for. So, if fascism is useful, we must ask: to whom is it useful? The previous example of anti-Semitism offers a clue. Fascism provides a scapegoat. Fascism encourages poor members of the dominant group (e.g. poor whites or poor Christians) to hate some other group, so that their real enemy will be safe. Poor people have good reason to hate rich people. If Jews can stand in for rich people (as part of some international bankers' conspiracy), then poor people will hate Jews, and Judaism, rather than hating rich people, and capitalism. When this happens, the elite can smile and be at peace: they are safe from the anger of those they exploit. The hatred of fascism also targets oppressed groups. In US history this means blacks, Native Americans, and latino immigrants. Poor whites must take part in exploiting the lowest classes (in the days of slavery they often held the whip). According to the mythology of white supremacy, all white people are supposed to be superior (including in terms of wealth and power). Fascism teaches

poor, powerless whites to blame and hate the blacks and immigrants (for “causing crime” or “stealing our jobs”) instead of their true enemy, the elite. This hatred also creates a psychological distance that makes it easier for them to oppress people of color, and harder for them to unite. It is rich white people, the capitalists and government elite, who become rich from slavery, immigrant labor, and other forms of exploitation, but it is the working-class whites who must play the role of police. They get little material benefit, but fool themselves with psychological benefit, by pretending they are powerful and superior as members of some mythical white race. The rich whites can laugh all the way to the bank that they have made so many working-class whites into their tools so easily, and so cheaply.

5. If it is correct that the elite are the beneficiaries of fascism, then we should be able to find evidence of elite support for fascism. And in fact we do. Many European Union governments sponsor the idea of “cultural purity” and protecting superior European culture from the “pollution” of immigration, by requiring immigrants to pass cultural tests. The corporate media (owned by the elite) in the EU and the US cover the immigration issue in a way that is sure to encourage ignorance and fear. For example, they rarely give the context of why people immigrate, whose corporations and whose wars have destroyed their homelands. They rarely mention the fact that European or US economies would collapse without immigrant labor, that white consumers depend on the cheap labor and cheap imports (fruit, clothing, computers, cell phones, etc.) of the immigrants and the countries they come from. And in the US, members of the elite give great financial support to the more respectable fascist groups (especially the Christian fundamentalists). George W. Bush has even been successful (as was Reagan) in getting government money to such groups. In countries like Italy, Poland, Ukraine, and Russia it is also easy to find evidence of the government or church giving ideological or material support to fascists. Clearly, the elite feed the fears and ignorance that provide a foundation for fascism.
6. What do the elite get from fascism in return? Very much. Fascist tools do not disappoint their elite owners. Fascists help distract the lower-classes by blaming the problems of the elite (poverty, disempowerment, corporate globalization) on a scapegoat, such as immigrants. The 2006 riots in Hungary provide a perfect example. People were so upset with the horrible conditions that they took the streets, fought off police, and occupied the state television station, yet this was no revolution! The crowds were dominated by fascist ideologies, so in the face of capitalist exploitation (worsened after their government joined the EU) they instead blamed people poorer than themselves — immigrants, they attacked a synagogue, and they lapsed into a fantasy of an idyllic Hungarian history, hundreds of years past, even though most of the people directly responsible for their problems were also Hungarians. Fascists divide the lower classes, causing them to fight one another, and creating the hatred and distance that makes it easy for whites and Christians to oppress and exploit people of color, Muslims, etc. Thus, they protect the elite from revolution.
7. Some fascists (inspired by Hitler’s “national socialism”) are more consciously anti-capitalist, or they think they are. These extremists are also useful to the elite, even though they often hate the governments they are the tools of. Firstly, they make any potential anti-capitalist revolution less effective by dividing the lower classes, and emphasizing race. Because they confuse the actual nature of capitalism they end up supporting a national cap-

italism (at most this will only involve greater government control, similar to the “socialism” of Hitler or Lenin). Secondly, as extremists who pretend to be revolutionary, they reserve much of their hatred for communists, anti-fascists, and anarchists. Authoritarian communists are just like another competing sect of fascists, and once in power they have shown willingness to use their same methods to purge or purify their country. Right-wing and Left-wing fascists may fight, but in the end they can find much common ground (as we see in Lenin’s treaty with the Austro-Germans, the Nazi-Soviet treaty, and more recently the emergence of the fascist “National Bolsheviks” and the support of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation for the xenophobic Movement Against Illegal Immigration). Anarchists, on the other hand, want to abolish all political power, so they present an uncompromising threat to the elite. It is no coincidence that fascists are uncompromising in their assault on anarchists. Fascists have attacked and even killed anarchists all across Europe and in the US. In some parts of eastern Europe, anarchists can hardly organize a fundraising concert, because of the certainty of attack by fascists. In this way, the fascists work as a paramilitary force for the state. In the US, the FBI (federal police) has long infiltrated the KKK and other white supremacist groups, using them for attacks against black radicals, such as the Greensboro Massacre; in Italy during the “Strategy of Tension” in the 70s, the intelligence services used fascist groups for murdering Leftists, or bombing crowded areas and blaming it on the Red Brigades; in Moscow in 2006, neo-Nazis fought alongside the police to attack the Gay Pride parade.

8. Aside from providing this constant service, fascists are useful tools of the state because the elite and bourgeoisie can use a fascist revolt to save it from a true lower-class revolution. Though fascism may topple a particular government, government is just a tool of the elite. In Italy, after the landowners, church leaders, and factory owners saw that they did so well under Mussolini, the bourgeoisie everywhere realized that fascism could save them from revolution. This realization led the elite in Spain to support Franco’s fascist coup, to save themselves from the growing anarchist movement.
9. Fascism is neither anti-authoritarian nor anti-capitalist, so the capitalist elite will be protected by fascism. Even fascists who are anti-rich and anti-globalization, who think they are anti-capitalist “national socialists” put their nationalism first, meaning they will be easily controlled by the capitalists of their own nationality. They have deprived themselves of the weapon of solidarity by cutting themselves off from the people of other nations. Nationalist governments that have won the support of fascists uphold capitalist inequalities and continue to facilitate globalization — the only problem is that they distract everyone from the same old problems by waving the flag, launching a war against a weaker country, or blaming some minority. But the problems of poverty and disempowerment remain. Thus, fascists who think they are “defending the nation” or “strengthening their people” are really just licking the boot. They are asking to be controlled by leaders of the same nationality, they are blindly swearing allegiance to an elite who will indulge their petty prejudices, and they are ensuring that their exploitation and powerlessness will continue.
10. Many fascists (particularly the neo-Nazis) base much of their criticism of social problems on race. But it is important to understand that in scientific terms, race does not exist. Some people are lighter than others, some darker, but there are no clear lines, and everybody

has mixed heritage. In terms of genetics, there is far more diversity within a single “race” than there is difference between the averages of the various races (i.e. your genes could easily be closer to those of someone from another race than to someone who is the same race as you). Race is a social invention. The concept did not exist until Europe began its colonial phase. Once they began enslaving Africans, colonizing Asians, and exterminating Native Americans, the European elite began speaking in terms of race to separate themselves, and dupe lower-class Europeans into filling the role of police and cooperating with the exploitation of the most oppressed. In the early American colonies, the ruling class had to quickly impose laws against whites marrying with Africans or living with Native Americans, because on several occasions the lower-class Europeans joined with the colonized people in rebellion, or ran off to live with them (finding those societies to have more freedom).

11. Capitalism and the state will always produce resentment and rebellion. People do not like to be controlled, or exploited. The racism and authoritarianism of the state will cause some malcontents to blame the scapegoats and cling to fascist ideals of rebellion. Direct propaganda by the state ensures the growth of fascism within the populations of the dispossessed. Thus, as long as the state exists, fascism is inevitable. Those who oppose fascism must support anti-authoritarian revolution. (Authoritarian revolution is no answer, because the state is a tool of domination, and even if it can be taken out of the hands of a particular capitalist class, it will turn those who wield it into a new, similar elite class. And after all, the authoritarian Left revolutions brought about governments like the USSR that were similar to the fascist states in many ways). But if there is a strong fascist movement, revolution becomes difficult or impossible, because of the ability of fascists to divide the lower-classes and attack revolutionaries.
12. Therefore, people opposed to fascism must attack government and capitalism as the causes, while treating fascism as an aggressive and disabling symptom. Anti-fascists with no critique of capitalism or the state are fighting a losing battle, because they confuse cause with effect. Fascists do not come from nowhere. They are encouraged by the state, and they draw on the anger that is produced by capitalism. Fascism cannot be defeated by simply beating up fascists (although in the short-term self-defense is certainly necessary). After all, fascists often recruit from the poor populations that might support true anti-capitalist revolution if they could be educated to see past xenophobia and racism.
13. So, to defeat fascism we need to create an anti-capitalist movement that is also anti-authoritarian. And such a movement needs to belong to people of all colors and nations, capable of international solidarity. But renouncing the national/ethnic divisions of the fascists does not mean ignoring any such divisions that do exist in society. It is the liberals who take the hypocritical “color blind” approach to racism. There are not inherent differences between people with different skin color — in this sense we are all equal. But there are differences in our cultures and histories. It makes a big difference if society has treated you and your ancestors like subhumans. Systems of privilege and oppression continue to divide us, even when we have good intentions. Often white anti-fascists ignore these divisions and make themselves unable to work with people of color by holding onto their privilege or being blind to real differences in needs, histories, and consequences of action (e.g. how

harshly the police will react to different people based on skin-color). This is one reason that “anti-fascist” movements throughout Europe and the US are almost entirely white, effectively excluding people of color and immigrants. Overcoming white supremacy is just as important as overcoming capitalism, and being color-blind to the point of just seeing economics is a way that white people divide the movement (many people of color will not want to work with whites who minimize the far-reaching problems of white supremacy). White people must also find their own reasons for fighting against the alienating, disempowering system of white supremacy. Instead of ignoring it, seeing how it hurts and limits their own identities can help them become better allies to people of color who are more obviously hurt by racism. Overcoming the segregation that ironically plagues antifascists does not mean white antifascists inviting activist immigrants and people of color into their movement. On the contrary, it means white anti-fascists need to understand how they can be better allies to those who suffer fascism most directly; and it also means they need to take responsibility for, rather than disowning, those whites who have been misguided by racism into becoming the fascist base, and educating them. Therefore, the immediate steps towards building a movement capable of destroying fascism at its source are understanding how our society feeds fascism and learning where to obstruct this process; understanding how privileged and oppressed people experience fascism and resistance differently, and bringing these understandings together in a spirit of mutual assistance; and directing the rage of people insulted daily by exploitation and authority, away from the scapegoats and towards the deserving targets: capitalism and the state.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Peter Gelderloos
Fascists are the Tools of the State
2007

Retrieved on June 18, 2009 from news.infoshop.org

theanarchistlibrary.org