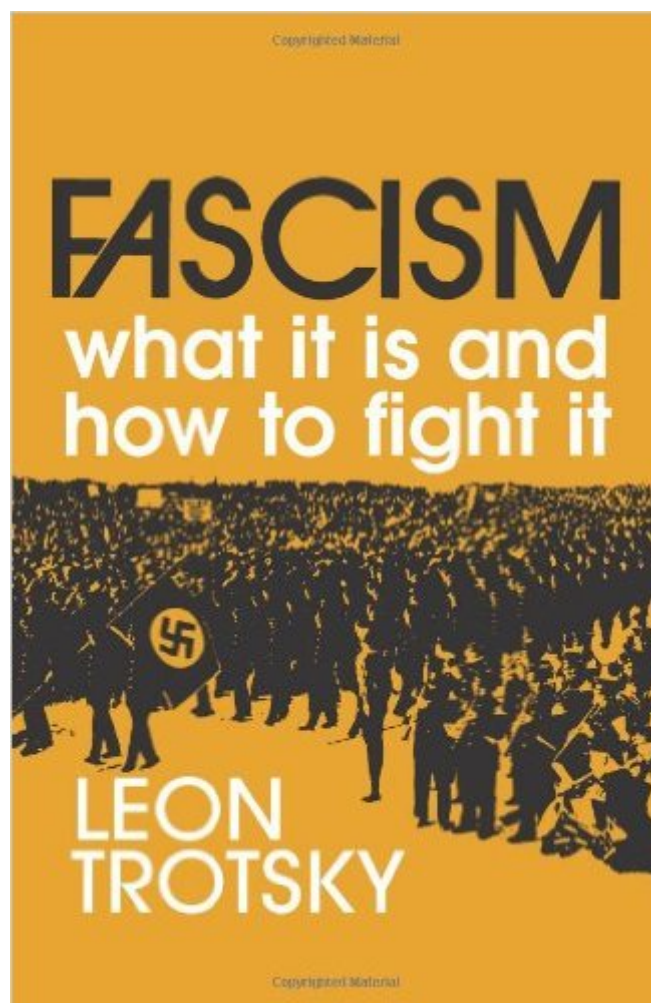


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Fascism: What It Is And How To Fight It



Synopsis

Writing in the heat of struggle against the rise of fascism in Germany, France, and Spain in the 1930s, communist leader Leon Trotsky examines the class origins and character of fascist movements. Building on foundations laid by the Communist International in Lenin's time, Trotsky advances a working-class strategy to combat and defeat this malignant danger. Also available in: French

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Customer Reviews

A brief collection of some of Trotsky's important letters and articles regarding fascism, this pamphlet offers a brief introduction to the nature of fascism, the conditions that give rise to it, and the strategy of resisting it through a "united front." Based on his observations of the growth of National Socialism (i.e. fascism) in Italy, Germany, Spain, and France, Trotsky concludes that fascism is a mass movement based primarily in petite bourgeoisie and backed by the big capitalist powers. Trotsky identifies a twofold set of conditions that allowed fascism to take hold in Europe: 1) the disorientation and desperation (primarily among the petite bourgeoisie) brought on by the abrupt end of capitalism's growth phase and 2) the absence or failure of a genuinely revolutionary workers' party that offers both the proletariat and the petite bourgeoisie the hope of escape from the grasp of the bourgeoisie. Accordingly, Trotsky assigns a fair proportion of the blame for the rise of fascism in Europe to the leaders of the Communist parties, the Comintern, and the leaders of the social democratic parties who betrayed the workers' revolutions in Germany, France, Spain, and Italy.

Trotsky links fascism to the reactionary backlash that followed these aborted revolutions, and counterpoises against the notion of the Communist Party as a form of revolutionary hope the notion of fascism, as a mass movement, as a form of revolutionary despair. In light of the social foundation upon which fascism rests, Trotsky emphasizes the need for a united front led by a revolutionary proletarian party (as the vanguard of the proletarian class) against fascism. In order for the proletariat to inspire confidence among the petite bourgeoisie, however, the revolutionary movement must first possess confidence in itself.

I remember buying this pamphlet, one of my first political readings, as a schoolboy in 1987. Its general analysis struck me at the time as well argued and demonstrated that Trotsky understood the danger that fascism posed to humanity before most contemporaries. I lost my copy of the pamphlet over 20 years ago and it is only with the Trump campaign in 2016 that I decided to buy several copies of this small book to use in discussion with others. Trotsky posits the main force behind fascism as being the middle class in conditions of economic crisis and the shattering of assumptions about upward mobility. In the first of eleven articles written between 1930 - 1940, Trotsky states, "The genuine basis (for fascism) is the petty bourgeoisie. In Italy it has a very large base - the petty bourgeoisie of the towns and cities, and the peasantry. In Germany likewise there is a large base for fascism." In a later article the author describes Hitler's movement as, "a broad current whose ideology is composed of all the putrid vapors of disintegrating bourgeois society." This description could certainly be used to describe the atmosphere at recent Donald Trump rallies! If the first half of the book's title implies an analysis of fascism, the latter half implies a call to action to defeat fascism. Trotsky's basic call was for all working class organizations to make agreements to confront fascism on the city streets of Germany. Specifically Trotsky advocated for a United Front of the German Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party to defend each other's resources and organizations in a mass confrontation with Hitler's brownshirts. Tragically, none of this advice was heeded and the different forces of Germany's left fought the Nazi party separately and inconsistently.

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