



The National and Social Liberation of the German People

Nationalist, Socialist, Bolshevist: the Communist Party of Germany's 'nationalcommunist' political programme of August 1930

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany approves, on the proposal of comrade Ernst Thälmann,¹ the following proclamation for the national and social liberation of the German people. This declaration, which is addressed to all workers throughout Germany, has a programmatic significance that goes far beyond the scope of day-to-day politics. It constitutes a historical document that points the way for the entire working German people and illustrates for the first time the critical guidelines for the government policy of the coming German Soviet power. While Social Democracy wants to sustain and perpetuate the existent state of misery, while the Hitler-party with deceitful phrases heralds a nebulous "Third Reich" that in reality would look even worse than the present wretchedness, we communists say clearly what we want. We conceal nothing. We make no promises that we will not unequivocally keep. Every laborer, every female worker, every young proletarian, every office worker, every member of the cities' indigent middleclasses, every working peasant in the country, every honest productive person in Germany, should with full clarity be convinced of our goal. The only way to the national liberation of the broad masses [Volksmassen] is a Soviet Germany.

For the present elections we call upon every working person in city and country to decide for a Soviet Germany by voting for List 4, for the list of the Communist Party.



Proclamation of the CC of the KPD

The German fascists (National Socialists) are presently engaged in the most aggressive advances against the German working-class. In a period of German enslavement through the Treaty of Versailles, growing crisis, unemployment, and the misery of the masses, the fascists attempt, through unbridled demagogy and the shrieking of radical phrases under the banner of resistance against the Policy of Fulfillment² and the Young Plan, to win over significant layers of the petty bourgeoisie, déclassée intellectuals, students, office workers, and peasants, as well as groups of backward, unenlightened workers. The partial successes of National Socialist agitation are the result of twelve years of treacherous policies by Social Democracy, which, through suppression of the revolutionary movement, participation in capitalist rationalization, and complete capitulation before the imperialists (France, Poland), have prepared the ground for National Socialist demagogy.

Against this National Socialist demagogy the Communist Party of Germany sets its programme of struggle against fascism, its policy of true representation of the interests of the working masses of Germany.

The fascists (National Socialists) maintain that they are fighting for the national liberation of the German people. They purport to be against the Young Plan, which brings misery and hunger to the working masses of Germany. These assurances by the fascists are deliberate lies. The German bourgeoisie has adopted the predatory Young Plan with the intention of passing all its burdens on to the working people.

The fascists provide practical help in the implementation of the Young Plan by condoning and encouraging the transfer of its burdens onto the working masses, by assisting in the implementation of the customs and tax laws dictated by the Young Plan (approval of the National Socialist Reichstag faction to all submissions for customs and tax increases; Frick's negro-tax in Thuringia³), by attempting to forestall and stifle all strike movements against wage reductions. The governing parties and Social Democracy have sold off the belongings, life, and existence of the working German people to the highest-bidding foreign imperialists. The Social Democratic leaders, Hermann Müller, Severing, Grzesinski und Zörgiebel,⁴ are not

only the executioner's assistants of the German bourgeoisie, but simultaneously the willing agents of French and Polish imperialism.

All actions of treacherous, corrupt Social Democracy represent continuous high treason against the vital interests of the working masses of Germany.

Only we communists are fighting against both the Young Plan and the Versailles plunderers' peace [*Raubfrieden*], the starting-point of the enslavement of all working people in Germany, as well as against all international treaties, agreements, and plans (the Locarno Treaty, Dawes Plan, Young Plan, German-Polish Agreement,⁵ etc.) that result from the Versailles Peace Treaty. We communists are against any fulfillment of reparations payments, against any payment of international debts.

We solemnly declare before all the peoples of the Earth, before all foreign governments and capitalists, that in the event of our seizure of power we will declare all obligations arising from the Treaty of Versailles to be null and void, that we will not render a single Pfennig in interest payments on the imperialist bonds, loans, and capital investments in Germany.

We lead and organize the struggle against taxes and duties, against rising rents and municipal tariffs, against wage cuts, unemployment, and every attempt to transfer the burdens of the Young Plan on to the working populace in city and country.

The fascists (National Socialists) maintain that they are against the borders drawn by the Versailles Peace, against the separation of a number of German territories from Germany. In reality, however, fascism suppresses the peoples subjected to it everywhere it is in power (in Italy the Germans and Croats; in Poland the Ukrainians, Byelorussians, and Germans; in Finland the Swedes, etc.). The leaders of German fascism, however, Hitler and his accomplices, do not raise their voices against the forcible annexation of South Tyrol by fascist Italy. Hitler and the German National Socialists keep silent over the needs of the German peasant communities of South Tyrol, who groan under the yoke of Italian fascism⁶.

Hitler and his party have concluded behind the backs of the German people a sordid secret pact with the Italian fascist regime, on the basis of which the German territory of the South Tyrol is handed over unconditionally to the foreign conquerors. With this despicable act Hitler and his party have sold off the national interests of Germany's working masses to the victorious powers of Versailles, in the same fashion as German Social Democracy has been continuously doing for twelve years. We communists declare that we do not accept the forcible incorporation of a people or

part of a population [*Volksteiles*] into other national state-structures, that we do not recognize a single border that is drawn without the consent of the working masses and the actual majority of the population.

We communists are opposed to the territorial rupturing and plundering of Germany carried out as a consequence of the dictated peace of Versailles.

The fascists (National Socialists) maintain that their movement is directed against imperialism. In reality, however, they enter into agreements with imperialists (England, Italy). They turn against the struggle for freedom [*Freiheitskampf*] of colonial peoples (India, China, Indochina); demand colonies for Germany; and chase after new wars, above all seeking intervention against the Soviet Union, the only country whose victorious working class has triumphantly defended itself by force of arms against all assaults by World Capital, against all raids by the Versailles imperialists. Wherever imperialism enslaves, strangles, and shoots down the oppressed masses of the people, the German fascists work through their representatives: in China through the Kapp-putschists Wetzel and Kriebel, in South America through the military mission of General Kuntz, in Austria through the Liebknecht-murderer Papst.

We communists are the only party that seeks the overthrow of imperialism and the liberation of the people from the power of finance-capital. Therefore we call upon the working masses of Germany to fight above all against the enemy in their own country for the overthrow of capitalist rule and the establishment of Soviet power in Germany, to tear up the Versailles Peace Treaty and to do away with its consequences.

The fascists (National Socialists) maintain that they are a “national”, a “socialist”, and a “workers” party. We retort that they are anti-populist [*volksfeindliche*] and anti-labour, anti-socialist, a party of the most extreme reaction, of the exploitation and enslavement of the working people. A party anxious to take from the working people everything that even the bourgeois and Social Democratic governments could not take from them. A party of murderous, fascist dictatorship, a party for the reestablishment of the regime of the Junkers and officers, a party for the restoration of the “hereditary” privileges [*“angestammten” Rechte*] of countless German princes, for the reinstatement of officers and high officials to their titles and posts.

The fascists (National Socialists) maintain that they are opponents of today’s state and social order. At the same time, however, they participate alongside the parties of big business in the government of the Weimar Republic in Thuringia. They share

ministerial seats with the capitalist Peoples' Party [*Volkspartei*] and with the landlords of the Economic Party [*Wirtschaftspartei*]. In Saxony they bargain with everyone from the businessmen's parties to the "Peoples' National Association"⁷ over the formation of a coalition government. They declare themselves willing to participate in a national government with all bourgeois Young Plan parties. They control police departments in Thuringia. They are subsidized by capitalists. They tolerate in their own ranks not only Hohenzollern princes, Coburg dukes, and noble lords, but also numerous manorial landowners, industrialists, and millionaires, including the exploiter Kirdorf and other agitators like the textile manufacturer Mutschmann.⁸

Every party in Germany, with the single exception of the Communist Party, is pursuing coalition politics in the Reich, in Prussia, in Thuringia, and in the other individual states. Every party, other than the Communists, is a coalition-party, a governing-party, a ministerial-party.

Only we communists are opposed to any collaboration with the bourgeoisie; only we are for the revolutionary overthrow of the contemporary capitalist social-order, for the abolition of all rights and privileges of the ruling classes, for the elimination of all exploitation.

The National Socialists maintain that the economic crisis and the plundering of the masses are merely consequences of the Young Plan, that the surmounting of the crisis is already assured so long as Germany casts off the shackles of the Versailles Treaty. This is a gross fraud. To liberate the German people it is not enough simply to break the power of foreign capital, but the rule of their own bourgeoisie in their own country must be overthrown at the same time. The crisis rages not only in the Germany of the Young Plan, but also in the victorious imperial powers with America at the forefront. Wherever the capitalists and their agents, the Social Democrats, are at the helm, the masses are exploited in the same way. Only in the Soviet Union are industry and agriculture on the ascendant. Only in the Soviet Union is unemployment eliminated, wages raised, and the sociopolitical accomplishments of the working people expanded to unprecedented heights. In every capitalist country, in every country of fascism and Social Democracy, there grows misery and hunger, wage cuts and unemployment, reaction and terror.

The Communist Party of Germany deploys the harshest political and defensive [*wehrhaften*] massstruggle against nationally-treacherous, anti-socialist, anti-labor fascism.

We fight for the working masses' salvation from the looming catastrophe.

We communists declare that, after the overthrow of the power of the capitalists and large landowners, after the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship in Germany, our first course will be to implement the following programme in fraternal alliance with the proletarians of all other countries, which we set against National Socialist demagoguery:

We will tear up the rapacious Versailles 'peace treaty' and the Young Plan which subjugate Germany; we will annul all international debts and reparations payments which the capitalists have imposed upon the working people of Germany.

We communists will champion the full right to self-determination for all nations and, in consensus with the revolutionary workers of France, England, Poland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, etc., will secure the opportunity of joining [*Anschlusses*] to Soviet Germany those German territories who express their desire for it.

We communists will conclude between Soviet Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics a firm political and economic alliance, on the basis of which the factories will supply Soviet Germany's industrial products to the Soviet Union, to receive foodstuffs and raw materials from the Soviet Union in return.

We declare before the working people of Germany: if today's Germany is vulnerable and isolated, then Soviet Germany, which will be buttressed by more than nine-tenths of its population and will enjoy the sympathy of the working peoples of all countries, need not fear invasion by foreign imperialists. We refer the working people of Germany to the fact that, only thanks to the support of the workers of all countries, has the Soviet Union successfully managed to repulse the interventions of World Imperialism with the aid of its invincible Red Army.

In contrast to the hypocritical fascist phrases against large bank and commercial capital, in contrast to the empty National Socialist war of words against parasites and corruption, we will implement the following programme:

Upon gaining power we will mercilessly put an end to the activities of the banking magnates, who openly impose their will over the country today. We will implement the proletarian nationalization of the banks and nullify the burden of debt to German and foreign capitalists.

The wholesalers, the magnates of commercial capital, are today driving the small merchants to ruin, throwing thousands of employees out into the streets, destroying the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of the middle-classes, extorting the peasants, and pushing up prices for massconsumption items. Upon gaining power we will put an end to the activities of the commercial magnates, nationalize the wholesaling system, and create strong consumer cooperatives that will truly represent the interests of all working peoples and liberate them from rapacious profiteers. We will smash with an iron fist any speculation which takes advantage of the misery of the working people.

We will destroy capitalist forms of the municipal economy,⁹ expropriate the large landowners without compensation, and billet the workers and the poor populations of the city into the houses of the rich.

We will scale the costs for rent, gas, water, electricity, transport, and all public utilities [*Kommunalleistungen*] in accordance with the class principle, reducing them to the minimum for proletarians and less well-off working people.

We will put an end to the bourgeoisie's fiscal policy. Through the seizure of power, the expropriation without compensation of the industrial enterprises, banks, large landowners, and wholesalers, the working class will create all the preconditions for the class budget [*Klassenhaushalt*] of the proletarian state. We will unconditionally ensure social security of all kinds (unemployment, disability, health, old age, and accident insurance; assistance for the war-disabled and for soldiers' surviving dependents) at the state's expense.

We will exempt the treasury of the German Soviet Republic from all unproductive expenditures on police and church, pensions and annuities. We will liberate it from being hounded by imperial princes, kings, dukes, nobles,¹⁰ marshals, generals, admirals; from ministerial salaries and ministerial pensions; from remuneration for reactionary officials; from corruption- and luxuryexpenses of every description.

We will break the rule of the large landowners; we will expropriate their land and property [*Grund und Boden*] without compensation and turn both over to the landless peasants; we will produce Soviet goods with the most state-of-the-art machinery; we will equate the working conditions of the rural proletariat with those of the urban working classes, and incorporate many millions of working peasants in the construction of socialism.

With an iron proletarian broom we will sweep away all parasites, industrial magnates, bankers, Junkers, big businessmen, generals, bourgeois politicians, traitor workers, speculators, and profiteers.

We will smash the machinery of power intended for the repression and enslavement of the working people. From the workshops all the way up to the German Soviet government – the proletariat, in alliance with all working people, will rule everywhere on a foundation of the truest, most extensive Soviet democracy.

Through the introduction of the seven-hour-day and the four-day working week, through a firm economic alliance with the Soviet Union and through uplifting the purchasing power of the masses, we will eradicate unemployment.

We will give everyone the opportunity to work. We will place all the productive forces of industry and agriculture exclusively into the service of the working people. We will guarantee full political equality to working women and working youth, equal pay for equal work.

We will raise wages by abolishing business profits, the unproductive costs of the capitalist economic system, and reparations payments. With bolshevist ruthlessness we will implement against all bourgeois loafers the principle: whoever does not work should also not eat.

We communists bring to the working people the programme of their social liberation from the yoke of capital. We will kindle the masses' enthusiasm for victory over the bourgeoisie, for the social and at the same time national liberation of the working German people. Only the hammer of proletarian dictatorship can shatter the chains of national subjugation and the Young Plan. Only the social revolution of the working class can resolve Germany's national question.

If every worker, every poor peasant, every office worker, every working middle-class person – men and women, youth and adults alike – suffering under the crisis of capitalism bands together in the Communist Party of Germany, then they will form a force of such insurmountable strength that they will not only be able to topple the rule of capital, but any resistance against them – both internal as well as external – is rendered completely futile.

Therefore we call upon all working people who are still under the spell of the cunning fascist swindlers [*Volksbetrüger*] to break unflinchingly and conclusively with National Socialism, to enlist in the army of proletarian class struggle. Therefore we

communists call for all workers who are still aligned with perfidious Social Democracy to break with this party of coalition politics, Versailles Peace, Young Plan, and the slavery of the working masses of Germany, to form a revolutionary front of millions with the communists and fight for proletarian dictatorship.

Down with the Young Plan!

Down with the government of capitalists and Junkers!

Down with Fascism and Social Democracy!

Long live the dictatorship of the proletariat!

Long live Soviet Germany!



Berlin, the 24th of August 1930

*The Central Committee of the Communist Party of
Germany (Section of the Communist International)*

Translator's Notes

1. *Ernst Thälmann* (pictured below speaking in Berlin, 1931) was the chairman of the Communist Party of Germany from 1925 until his imprisonment by the NS government in March 1933. Thälmann's leadership was promoted by the Soviet Union and coincided with the sidelining of the previous 'ultra-left' leadership and the increasing Stalinization of the KPD. Thälmann was an earthy character, a former unskilled dock-worker with rabble-rousing oratorical abilities and a distrust of intellectuals. Although not unintelligent by any means, it is unlikely that Thälmann was the author of the 'Programmatic Statement' as is hinted at here and as was claimed outright in the later German Democratic Republic; the attribution of the programme to Thälmann is a consequence of the personality cult which even then was being built around him. According to Comintern representative Georgi Dimitrov, Thälmann "did not understand" the new nationalist line and had to have it explained to him. Generally the programme's authorship is ascribed to party theoretician Heinz Neumann, although academic Martin Mevius claims in *The Communist Quest for National Legitimacy in Europe, 1918-1989* that it was written by Comintern functionaries Dmitry Manilsky, Wilhelm Knorin, and Otto Kuusinen under Stalin's direct supervision.
2. '*Policy of Fulfillment*' – *Erfüllungspolitik* in German. The policy pursued in particular by Gustav Stresemann as Foreign Minister from 1923-29 and supported by other liberal politicians, by which it was hoped that, through fulfilling the terms of the Treaty of Versailles (including reparations payments) as fully and cooperatively as possible, the Western Powers would be convinced of Germany's trustworthiness and renegotiate the terms to make them more favorable. The fulfillment policy was deeply unpopular in the nationalist and communist camps.

3. *'Negro-tax'* was the informal, mocking name given by political opponents to a taxation proposal put forward by NSDAP leading member Wilhelm Frick shortly after his appointment in January 1930 as Interior Minister and Minister of Education in the coalition government of Thuringia. Frick's proposal effectively constituted a flat-rate poll tax that would apply to every Thuringian citizen who was eligible to vote. The name 'negro-tax' derived from detractors' comparisons between the proposal and the tax practices in Germany's colonial administrations, where the local African populations had been taxed on a similar universal, flat-rate basis.
4. The description of the four Social-Democrats mentioned here as "executioner's assistants of the German bourgeoisie" is a reference to the *Blutmai* ('Bloody May'), a three-day Berlin riot over May 1-3 which began after large numbers of communists defied a ban on demonstrations and the police attempted to violently disperse them. There were 33 civilian deaths overall by the end of the *Blutmai*. Hermann Müller was Reich Foreign Minister at the time of the massacre; he and the cabinet he represented were excoriated by the Soviet government over the event. Albert Grzesinski was Prussian Interior Minister and responsible for Prussia's subsequent ban on the KPD's paramilitary, the Red Front Fighters' League (RFB). Carl Severing was Reich Interior Minister and, under Grzesinski's urging, extended the RFB ban nation-wide. Karl Zörgiebel was Berlin's Chief of Police and as such was held personally responsible for the police's behavior during the riots.
5. *The German-Polish Agreement* was signed between the two nations in 1922 as a consequence of the Versailles Treaty and the subsequent Silesian Uprisings, formalizing German loss of most of its Upper Silesian territory (containing vital coal resources and a sizable ethnic-German minority population) to Poland.
6. *South Tyrol*, formerly a region of Austria-Hungary, was annexed by Italy in 1920 as part of the spoils granted to it by the Treaty of Saint-Germain. Its population was around 90% ethnic-German and the people of South Tyrol became a cause célèbre among nationalists in both Austria and Germany, who incorporated the reclamation of the area into their territorial demands. The NSDAP was one notable exception to this stance. Hitler's position on South Tyrol was adopted early on in his political career, a far-sighted case of him putting pragmatical *Realpolitik* before his ideological Pan-Germanism. For Hitler, the only way to realistically reacquire South Tyrol was through war, and "if we have to shed German blood once again it would be criminal to do so for the sake of liberating 200,000 Germans..." Hitler was not willing to go to war with Italy, but he was willing to sacrifice territorial ambitions in the region to ease future relations with Italy and make a German-Italian alliance more feasible. This position was mocked by the left (who claimed that Hitler's policy was dictated by secret Italian bribes) and was deeply controversial within the NSDAP and among other nationalist groups. Hans Frank left the Party for two years in 1926 due to the South Tyrol question, and there was an active, heated debate on the issue in the late '20s as fascist Italy pursued a policy of forcibly 'Italianizing' the South Tyrolean population.
7. The *Peoples' National Reich Association* (in German *Volksnationale Reichsvereinigung*, VNR) was founded in Berlin on the 5th of April, 1930, by Artur Mahraun, leader of the 'Jungdo' (the *Jungdeutsche Orden*, a moderate-nationalist paramilitary group). Mahran's aim was to take the Jungdo's liberal-nationalist quest for a democratic German Reich into the political arena, despite the Jungdo's stated aversion to party politics. The claim here that the VNR in Saxony negotiated with the NSDAP is likely spurious – after the Saxon Landtag elections of June 20th both the VNR and the Democratic Party (DDP) called for a grand coalition of all non-radical parties, including the Social-Democrats, in order to keep the 14 National Socialist deputies elected out of government. When an attempt was made by the centre-right parties to form a coalition with the

NSDAP (with Gregor Strasser as Saxon Minister of the Interior), it was the VNR and DDP who blocked the attempt, leaving Saxony with a caretaker centrist government until 1933.

8. *Emil Kirdorf* was a prominent arch-reactionary Ruhr industrialist and DNVP member who provided Hitler with valuable introductions into business and industrial circles before 1933. *Martin Mutschmann* was a German businessman who served as NSDAP Gauleiter of Saxony from 1925 to 1945. He made his fortune with lace and textiles factories, and was a supporter of Gregor Strasser up until the 1932 'Strasser-crisis'. Ironically, Mutschmann would go bankrupt in the Great Depression not two months after the publication of this Programmatic Statement.
9. 'Municipal economy' – in German '*Kommunalwirtschaft*', which translates literally as 'communal economy'. Despite its German name the term does not hold any specifically communist, socialist, or cooperativist meaning; rather it refers to the basic, essential services (energy, transport, financial services, communications, drinking water, waste disposal and recycling, etc.) which are crucial for the population's quality of life and which local authorities should in principle provide based out of their concern for the common good, even if it proves unprofitable.
10. 'Noble' – the actual word here in German is '*Fürsten*', an aristocratic title for which there is no equivalent term in English. '*Fürst*' is usually translated as 'prince' in English writings, but this does not capture the distinction between it and the meaning of the word 'prince' in English (a non-governing son of a noble-ruler) – in the Holy Roman Empire the *Fürsten* were the highest nobility below the Kaiser, not just the sons of kings.



TRANSLATED BY BOGUMIL (ARPLAN.ORG) FROM KARL OTTO PAETEL'S
*NATIONALBOLSCHEWISMUS UND NATIONALREVOLUTIONÄRE BEWEGUNGEN IN
DEUTSCHLAND* (1965), VERLAG SIEGFRIED BUBLIES

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