

The Social-Nationalist

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Otto Strasser

Otto Johann Maximilian Strasser (September 10, 1897 – August 27, 1974) was a German politician and left-wing member of the National Socialist (Nazi) party who rejected some of Adolf Hitler's ideas and more moderate economical tendencies (those opposed to a radical socialist change and revolution). Strasser subsequently formed his own faction within the Nazi Party, along with his brother, Gregor Strasser.

Born in Bavaria, he took part in World War I and returned to Germany in 1919 where he served in the Freikorps that put down the Bavarian Soviet Republic. At the same time, he also joined the Social Democratic Party. In 1920 he participated in the opposition to the Kapp Putsch. However, he grew increasingly alienated with that reformist-socialist party's stand, particularly when it put down a workers' uprising in the Ruhr, and he left the party later that year. In 1925 he joined the Nazi (National Socialist) Party, which his brother had been a member of for several years, and worked for its newspaper, *Arbeiter Zeitung* (Workers' Gazette), as a journalist, ultimately taking it over with his brother. He took the socialist element in the party's programme seriously enough to lead a very socialist-inclined faction of the party in northern Germany together with his brother Gregor and Joseph Goebbels. His faction advocated support for strikes, nationalisation of banks and industry, and – despite acknowledged differences – closer ties with the Soviet Union. Some of these policies were opposed to by Hitler, who thought they were too radical and too alienating from parts to the German people (middle class and some Nazi-supporting nationalist industrialists in particular), and the Strasser faction was defeated at the Bamberg Conference (1926), with Joseph Goebbels joining Hitler. Humiliated, he nonetheless, along with his brother Gregor, continued as a leading Left Nazi within the Party, until expelled from the NSDAP by Hitler in 1930.

Following his expulsion, he set up his own party, the Black Front, composed of radical ex-Nazis, in an attempt to split the Nazi Party. Here his lack of intense Anti-Semitism was displayed by his willingness to associate with a Jewish exile from Germany named Helmut Hirsch, who would later be executed for an attempted plot on Hitler. His party proved unable to counter Hitler's rise to power in 1933, and Strasser spent the years of the Third Reich in exile. The Nazi Left itself was annihilated during the Night of the Long Knives in 1934 (in which his brother perished), leaving Hitler as undisputed party leader and able to pacify both industrialists and the military into accepting his new National Socialist regime.

Strasser fled first to Austria then Prague (here he resisted Hitler), Switzerland and France, and then, in 1940, he went to Bermuda by way of Portugal, leaving a wife and two children behind in Switzerland. In 1941, he emigrated to Canada, settling for a time in Montreal. In 1942, he lived for a time in Clarence, Nova Scotia, on a farm owned by a German-speaking Czech, Adolph Schmidt, and then moved to nearby Paradise, Nova Scotia, where he lived for more than a decade in a rented apartment above a general store. As an influential and uncondemned former Nazi-Party member still faithful to many doctrines of National Socialism, he was prevented from returning to West Germany after the war, first by the Allied powers and then by the West German government. He finally made it home to Munich in the mid 1950s.

During his exile, he wrote articles on the Third Reich and Nazi leadership for a number of British, American and Canadian newspapers, including the *New Statesman*, and a series for the *Montreal Gazette*, which was ghostwritten by then Gazette reporter and later politician Donald C. MacDonald.

Strasser was allowed to return to Germany in 1955 by a ruling of the Federal Administrative Court (after having previously been denied entry by the West-German government) and regained his citizenship. He attempted to create his own, new, "nationalist and socialist"-oriented party in 1956, the German Social Union (often called a successor to the 1949-1952 forbidden Socialist Reich Party of Germany), but it was unable to attract support. For the rest of his life, Strasser continued to call for and propagate neo-Nazism until his death in Munich in 1974.

Otto Strasser's ideology continues to this day to influence a radical leftist strain of neo-Nazism which clamours

for nationalization of industrial (“capitalist”) property, and wholesale land redistribution to poor farmers and workers. Amongst those influenced by Strasser have been Nick Griffin, National anarchist founder Troy Southgate and those of the American Strasserite group Folk And Faith.