

Adolf Hitler on Trade Unions (1925)

Abstract

While he was imprisoned for high treason after his failed coup attempt, Hitler wrote the first part of his book, *Mein Kampf*, a mixture of autobiography and political manifesto in which he set out the most important elements of National Socialism and its racial ideology. The second part was published a year later, also by the NSDAP's own publishing house, Franz Eher in Munich. In this excerpt, Hitler describes the strategy of bringing the various institutions within the state into line [*Gleichschaltung*], through which the National Socialists were to succeed in establishing a dictatorship very quickly after coming to power. He writes that it was particularly important to ensure that the trade unions and employers' associations were imbued with Nazi ideology and convictions. After Hitler and the NSDAP came to power in 1933, he quickly moved to destroy the free trade unions, which traditionally supported left-wing parties, and replace them with the party-affiliated German Labor Front (DAF).

Source

[...]

The National Socialist movement, which envisions the National Socialist folkish [*völkisch*] state as the aim of its activity, cannot doubt that all future institutions of this future state must grow out of the movement itself. It is the greatest error to believe that suddenly, once we have power, we can undertake a definite reorganization out of the void, unless we previously possess a certain basic stock of men who above all have been educated with regard to loyalty. Here, too, the principle applies that more important than the outward form, which can be created mechanically and very quickly, remains the spirit which fills such a form. For instance, it is quite possible dictatorially to graft the leader principle on a state organism by command. But it will only be alive if it has gradually taken shape from the smallest beginnings in a development of its own, and, by the constant selection which life's hard reality incessantly performs, has obtained in the course of many years the leader material necessary for the execution of this principle.

And so we must not imagine that we can suddenly pull the plans for a new state form out of a briefcase into the light of day and 'introduce' them by decree from above. Such a thing can be attempted, but the result will surely be incapable of survival, in most cases a stillborn child. This reminds me of the beginning of the Weimar regime and the attempt to present the German people with not only a new regime, but a new flag which had no inner bond with the experience of our people in the last half century.

The National Socialist state must beware of such experiments. It can, when the time comes, only grow out of an organization that has long existed. This organization must possess National Socialist life innate within itself, in order to finally create a living National Socialist state.

As already emphasized, the germ cells of the economic chambers will have to reside in bodies representing the most varied occupations, hence above all in the trade unions. And if this future body representing the estates and the central economic parliament are to constitute a National Socialist institution, these important germ cells must also embody a National Socialist attitude and conception. The institutions of the movement are to be transferred to the state, but the state cannot suddenly conjure up the required institutions from the void, unless they are to remain utterly lifeless structures.

Source: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1925). Two Volumes in One. Unabridged edition. Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Frz. Eher Nachf., G.m.b.H., 1943, pp. 672–74.

Source of English translation: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1925), translated by Ralph Manheim. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943, pp. 598–99.

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