

Chris Holmsted Larsen and Flemming Mikkelsen

Working title: Popular struggle and political violence in Denmark, 1914-1939

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to place fascism and anti-fascism within a broader context of popular struggle. Popular struggle includes many forms of collective action, most of which can be easily identified as a contentious gathering where people act together publicly and confront an opponent with claims. This definition includes both peaceful and violent collective actions. Contentious collective action is the basis of political movements, and the interwar period witnessed the formation of several new political movements such as the Syndicalists, Communists, rural protest movements and Fascists/Nazis that competed with the traditional labour movement and the liberal movement. However, a real novelty was the emergence of actual youth mass organizations and movements. It was these political youth associations, which introduced (actually imported from Germany) new forms of public political performances, but also used collective violence as a political weapon often much to the annoyance of the established part of the political system. – The Nazis tried to gain ground both as a political party and as a political movement, but without significant success. They had their stronghold in South Jutland and in some middle-sized provincial towns but never managed to establish themselves as a serious political challenger in Copenhagen or in the countryside due to the encompassing mobilization capacity of the Social Democrats and the Liberals. As an alternative option, the Nazis went into coalition with some of the more powerful rural protest movements, and tried to connect with the German minority in North Schleswig and North German Nazis south of the boarder. Especially the latter posed a threat to social and political stability in Denmark after the Nazi seizure of power in Germany 1933, and only a massive counter-mobilization by the liberal constituency and rural civil society (and the Social Democrats ?) put a damper on the aggressive Nazi movement.

Chris Holmsted Larsen, Ph.d. in history, is research fellow at the Department of Communication and Arts, Roskilde University. He teaches and researches in Communism, political violence, protest movements and the labour movement.

Flemming Mikkelsen, Dr.scient.pol. et cand.mag. in political science, history and sociology, is Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen. He is currently working in the fields of social movements, ethnic relations, social history and historical sociology