

Law or Fist?

- Social Democracy and anti-fascism in Sweden 1924-1950

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In the 1930s, confrontations between Socialists and Nazis were common in Sweden. There were debates and rallies, as well as physical clashes. This paper aims to investigate how these political confrontations in local communities shaped the Swedish Social democratic understanding of political action. The main question is: How and in what ways did confrontations between locally active Social democrats and Nazis during the period 1924-1945 contribute to shape Social democratic political culture? International research shows that in the shadow of Nazism and Fascism, Social democracy in Europe changed both their organizational culture and their view on the political system. Concerning Sweden, there are no developed studies in this area of research. The paper is based on a definition of political culture that includes both attitudes and concrete actions. Methodologically, the paper operationalize text-analytical tools to examine how the actors, through concepts, expressions, metaphors, dichotomies, categorizations, symbolism, and rituals, made policy in both word and deed. The sources consist of newspapers, party documents, police reports, court documents, and biographical material. This paper strive to highlight the dynamics in which the political culture that came to characterize post-war Sweden was formed, and to deepen the understanding and knowledge of the anti-fascist tradition in Sweden and how anti-democratic forces have been countered in public spaces.