

Summary of 4th Anti-Fascist Harbour Event "Wolf Hoffmann" in Hamburg 2014



"Anti-militarist struggle - then and now",

was the motto of the 4th Anti-Fascist Harbour Event in Hamburg. The resistance of the shipyard workers, the rebuttal of the thesis: fascism = socialism, the exemplary story of the brigadier Erich "Vatti" Hoffmann, and his struggle for a socialist and therefore humanistic society, were among others the focus of this weekend.

Friday evening was the friendship and solidarity event with our comrades from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Austria, France, Spain and Sweden. The evening had a musical theme with the appearance of our Pascal (ACER) from Paris and the music group Sokugayu (Hamburg) who performed a program commemorating the poet Erich Mühsam. He was murdered by the Nazis 1934.

The event was opened with a reading of the words of greeting from brigadier Gert Hoffmann from Vienna. Unfortunately Gert died a few weeks later. Gert's last words were to us all: "... Long live the international solidarity of all peoples who have been the victims of the capitalist profit system! Long live our fraternal friendship with the peoples of Greece, Italy, Portugal, Ireland and Spain, which are all in the struggle against the hunger policies of their governments." - Gert, we will continue your legacy!

The event at the „Seemannsheim“ was publicly advertised. Thus, there were also people who had no points of contact with us, but were listening in a very interested and excited way.

On Saturday many came to visit the Ernst Thälmann Memorial (GET) in Hamburg. The chair, Hein Pfohlmann, guided them through the exhibition and thereafter on a tour of the revolutionary foci around the Memorial. The group were waving the flag of the International Brigades, which encouraged some passers-by to ask about the event.

The visitors tried to take in the wealth of documents that the memorial has to offer. It should be noted that the Hamburg comrades fight constantly, and naturally on an honorary basis, for the preservation of this unique gem of the German labour movement. The memorial receives no government support, and is exposed to constant hostility and historical falsifications.

As an example, the often misrepresented relationship of Ernst Thälmann with the Social Democratic comrades. Thus one finds in the GET an illegal leaflet from the Hamburg Social Democratic Party (SPD), written in late 1933, which is about Ernst Thälmann:

"... Thälmann was no coup leader, not a follower of individual terror, but a socialist, when it came to intellectual conflicts. We have always and ardently wished with all our hearts that the words he proclaimed for the creation of uniform socialist actions had become life and reality. "

You would think that after the Second World War this knowledge would have matured into general acceptance in trade union and social democratic circles. But unfortunately, far from it, as an outrageous story from 1970 shows, which was one of the topics of the Harbour Event.

To illustrate: A plaque for 11 workers murdered by the fascists was placed in the shipyard 1945. In 1970, this plaque disappeared. A request from the Hamburg Organisations of the Persecuted to the works council in the shipyard, to set up a new plaque in the grounds, was refused. Their reason: „such a panel is not a worthy commemoration and it's better to remember the victims at the great memorials in town“.

That decision was considered by the resistance fighters in the organisations of the persecuted as an act against the German resistance. No official plaque exists in the yard to this day!

For the shipyard workers and dockers the old river Elbe Tunnel was the route to work.



This way, the participants went during the Event to commemorate the murdered resistance fighters on the other side of the river Elbe. A Scottish comrade carried the Interbrigades flag through the old tunnel.

Now, however, young anti-fascists had created, to the surprise of all, a plaque and installed it during our memorial lecture on the viewing platform at the old Elbe Tunnel.

It was a moving moment, as flowers were laid down there and spontaneously the song of the peat bog soldiers was sung in different languages.

On the subsequent harbour boat tour, the participants heard a detailed description of the resistance at the shipyard Blohm &

Voss. Briefly some essential aspects of the lecture:

The Communist shipyard members began immediately, after the transfer of power to the fascists, with their resistance work (the predominantly social-democratic part of the workforce held back). The resistance work consisted essentially in the creation of leaflets, illegal newspapers and collecting information.

But resistance work also took the form of organised sabotage, such as in the field of welding. This work could not be checked so easily. Very effective sabotage was also perpetrated in the design and drawing office. Incorrect drawings were made and spare parts deliveries were sent to the wrong consignees.

So, for example, the two-man submarine could never be used by the Nazis in the war. The engineers and designers had incorporated many mistakes in the construction. The resistance was of course not without its dangers. Many activists were uncovered, arrested, tortured and imprisoned. However, it was not possible for the Nazis to break the basic anti-fascist position of shipyard workers.

According to reports of the Gestapo, 70% of the workforce was firmly hostile to the Nazis.

An interesting point was the attitude of the workers to the war. The workers hoped for a war that would finally put an end to the Hitler regime. The Spanish war was seen from this perspective - a war against the fascists. It was hoped eagerly for a victory for the Republic and this was supported with clandestine collections and activities. Walter Ulbricht reported 1939 in Moscow about a support group in Hamburg, which regularly collected information on Nazi transports to Franco. They informed the foreign press, so that they were able to uncover these supplies.

After the very informative harbour boat trip, we were guests in the International Seafarers Club DUCKDALBEN. There, the Harbour Event was continued with an impressive presentation by young anti-fascists about their anti-militarist struggle and their activities against the war policy of the Federal Republic of Germany and the EU. They fight with creativity and courage against the increasing militarisation and the trivialisation of war in Germany.

The guest speaker, we were able to welcome the former ITF President Eike Eulen. In his speech he particularly praised the anti-fascist struggle of Edo Fimmen. Edo Fimmen was Secretary and a prominent activist of the International Transport Workers' Federation of the 20s and 30s in the struggle against fascism.

So he organized, among other things illegal arms shipments to the Spanish Republic.

Then, Manus O'Riordan, our comrade from Dublin, sang with his wonderful voice the song "*Ship for Spain* "...." I had a ship, the captain said, A ship that sailed for Spain, And when I get another ship I'll sail there once again... ". The song originated in 1938 in the support of British sailors for the Spanish Republic.



The evening closed with our singing comrades Pascal Gabay from Paris and Achim Bigus with songs from the Spanish War in German and French.

The program on Sunday refuted once again the perversity of the thesis "fascism=socialism".

To illustrate: In Hamburg there is a memorial to murdered children by the Nazi beasts - "The Children of Bullenhuserdamm"-. The memorial and exhibition are housed in the basement of the building where the children were hanged from heating pipes. We were all deeply shaken. Yes,

many of us had tears in their eyes as they left the memorial and went to the adjacent international remembrance garden. Vera Dehle-Thälmann, granddaughter of Ernst Thälmann found, with a heavy heart, words to commemorate the children and the Soviet forced labourers murdered there, too. Vera is the active chair of the camp community Ravensbrück.

Still dazed by the impressions, waiting for us in the Willi Bredel Society was a lecture on the Spanish Civil War Brigader Erich Hoffmann, called "Vatti" (father), presented by Thomas Mayer.

The description of the life of Erich Hoffmann in this presentation made clear, that the fighters of the Interbrigades had a deeply humanistic spirit by sacrificing their lives for others. The long ordeal of Erich Hoffmann - the Communist, who was tortured by the Nazis and severely wounded in the Spanish Civil War, led him to Auschwitz. There in 1944 his resistance group succeeded in saving Hungarian children from being murdered by the SS. They took the children from Auschwitz on the death march to Buchenwald. April 11, 1945, the day of the self-liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp, was also the day of liberation for "Vatti".

The best thing for him was that 150 children could see this day alive.

Erich Hoffmann died on 14/2/59 at the age of 53 years. He is buried in the grounds of the Hamburg resistance fighters (Ehrenhain der Hamburger Widerstandskämpfer).

In this "Ehrenhain der Hamburger Widerstandskämpfer" the Harbour Event found its worthy conclusion. We decorated the graves with red carnations and our singer and songwriters Peter Schenzer and Dirk Wilke sang together with us resistance songs in different languages.

The next Anti-Fascist Harbour Event is dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the liberation from fascism.

At the heart of the event will be the Soviet Union, their aid to the Spanish Republic and the British and Soviet Blockade Runners in the Spanish Civil War.



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