

Fascists march in Auschwitz

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On January 27, the 74th anniversary of the liberation of the death camp of Auschwitz by the Soviet Red Army, between 50 and 100 Polish fascists marched through the doors of the camp, where more than 1 million European Jews were gassed by the Nazis during World War II. The fascists sang the Polish national anthem and shouted anti-Semitic slogans. The leader of the demonstration, Piotr Rybak, infamous for burning an effigy representing a Jew in 2015, stated that “It’s time to fight against Jewry and free Poland from them!”

Such a demonstration of far-right anti-Semitism at the Auschwitz memorial, which is universally seen as a symbol of the horrific crimes perpetrated by fascism, is historically unprecedented. This outrageous event is the outcome of political processes that have been unfolding in Poland and throughout Eastern Europe since the dissolution of the Stalinist regimes and the restoration of capitalism.

This year will mark the 30th anniversary of the dissolution of the Eastern European regimes by their Stalinist bureaucracies in 1989. Shortly thereafter, in December 1991, the Soviet bureaucracy destroyed the Soviet Union and fully restored capitalism in Russia.

The destruction of the deformed workers states in Eastern Europe, which had been established in the aftermath of World War II, and the dissolution of the USSR was made possible by decades of Stalinism, which had betrayed the internationalist and socialist principles of the October Revolution and disoriented the working class. As Leon Trotsky had warned, unless overthrown in a political revolution by the working class, the Stalinist bureaucracies would transform themselves into a new ruling class. This is exactly what happened.

This counterrevolutionary process was hailed and justified by bourgeois ideologists as a “democratic revolution.” The result, workers were told, would be

democracy, peace and prosperity for all. The opposite has been the case.

The restoration of capitalism has given rise to obscene levels of social inequality throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and immiserated tens of millions of workers. It has also transformed the region into a center stage for the systematic preparations of imperialism for another world war. Virtually all of these countries are now ruled by rabidly nationalist regimes that are preparing for war, promoting anti-Semitism and enacting police state measures.

The fascist protesters express the official state policy in Poland. In early 2018, the Polish government, led by the far-right Law and Justice Party (PiS), outlawed any mention of crimes perpetrated by Poles against Jews during the Holocaust. Since then, numerous historians working on Polish anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish pogroms have been fired from their jobs.

In November, prominent state officials, including Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, who participated in the official Auschwitz commemoration ceremony on January 27, marched alongside fascists from Poland and other European countries on Polish independence Day.

The resurgence of fascism in Poland and other Eastern European countries is a particularly sharp expression of what is an international process.

In Germany, the Grand Coalition has deliberately made the neo-fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) the principal opposition party and has adopted key aspects of its policies and rhetoric. While hundreds of thousands have demonstrated against the far-right over the past year, Jörg Baberowski, the Humboldt University academic, who has publicly stated that “Hitler wasn’t vicious,” is allowed to relativize the crimes of Nazism with the backing of the leading political parties and media at the prestigious Humboldt

University in Berlin.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron, who has presided over a violent crack-down on the yellow vest movement, recently hailed the fascist dictator Philippe Pétain as a “great soldier.”

In Ukraine, the celebration of Ukrainian fascist leader Stepan Bandera and his movement, which engaged in the mass murder of Poles, Jews and Ukrainian civilians during World War II, has become official state policy since the US-backed far-right coup in February 2014.

In the United States, the Trump administration has systematically whipped up fascistic sentiments, a policy that has already resulted in the largest ever assault on Jews on American soil in the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting last October.

The state buildup of fascist forces is the response by the bourgeoisie to the crisis of world capitalism. Faced with economic crisis and growing militancy within the international working class, bourgeois governments everywhere are resorting to the promotion of nationalism and the far-right to divide the working class and prepare the conditions and forces for war and counterrevolution. Historically, the promotion of anti-Semitism, in particular, has been a central ideological tool of the bourgeoisie to counter the rise of the socialist workers movement.

It speaks to the complicity of the capitalist media in this process that the fascist march in Auschwitz, much like the rehabilitation of Hitler by leading academics and the growth of the far-right in Germany, has gone almost completely unreported.

The International Committee of the Fourth International warned in the recent perspectives document *The Strategy of International Class Struggle and the Political Fight Against Capitalist Reaction in 2019*

Fascism is not yet, as it was in the 1930s, a mass movement. But to ignore the growing danger would be politically irresponsible. With the support of sections of the ruling class and the state, right-wing movements have been able to exploit demagogically the frustration and anger felt by the broad mass of the population. In this situation, the fight against the resurgence of extreme right-wing and fascistic movements

is an urgent political task.

The sight of a rabble of Nazi trash desecrating the memory of those who perished in Auschwitz is sickening and must be answered. But the response must be informed by an understanding of the inextricable link between capitalism, the crisis of bourgeois democracy and fascist reaction. Fascism cannot be defeated with mere moral denunciations or with appeals to the capitalist political parties to defend democracy. The fight against fascism is a political struggle that requires the mobilization of the working class on the basis of an uncompromising internationalist and socialist program.

The social basis for such a struggle is now emerging: In Matamoros, Mexico, 70,000 autoworkers have launched what is the biggest strike on the North American continent in two decades.

Strikes by autoworkers have also erupted in Hungary. Teachers in the United States have gone on several strikes against the attacks on public education in defiance of their unions. In India, tens of millions of workers joined a two-day general strike and tens of thousands are still on strike in Tamil Nadu. These struggles need to be expanded, unified and armed with a Marxist program to turn them into a conscious revolutionary movement by the working class against capitalist reaction. This is what the International Committee of the Fourth International is fighting for.



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