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Fascist terror grows across Europe

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fraternities were founded in the days of Bismark. With the Left enduring a very unfashionable period on the campuses these “Burschenschaften” are filling a vacuum with an active membership of 6,000. They are fencing clubs who use slogans such as “Honour, Freedom and Fatherland”.

They have also had David Irving as an invited guest speaker. The Silesian German territories lost to Poland in 1945 are a hotly debated subject. One member, Christian Paulwitz (23), said “What we keep calling east Germany today is for me middle Germany”. Given that conditions in most of the universities are steadily deteriorating it is of concern to see right-wing politics gain a strong grip on the campuses. This could ultimately lead to a right-wing revolt in the 1990s which may compare with the left-wing revolts of the 1960s. Once again it seems that the Right are recruiting the Left’s loss. This is exactly what Guerin meant when he said “What is Fascism, ...but a direct product of the failure to achieve socialism”.

Many arguments have been made to suggest that fascism needs a strong Left and labour movement, coupled with funding by the big capitalists to grow. Well obviously the first two are almost non-existent in the present period and the final criteria is doubtful, but if we continue to only chase these fascists/racists off the streets and fail to counter their arguments ideologically then we truly run the risk of watching the numbers of people we have to chase increasing. The anti-authoritarian Left needs to organise, develop its policies, get their message across to the working class that real socialism has not failed them and that there is a way out of this capitalist nightmare. We do not need to delve into diabolical fascism to achieve this.

The east German people have come through a period where their hopes have been raised and dashed. The Berlin Wall may have fallen but the unified Germany is fulfilling very few dreams. The neo-Nazi movement taps into the despair of people's lives and encourages the dislike of asylum seekers and foreigners. They have turned this dislike into open hostilities such as those witnessed in Rostock and Leverkusen. The left in Germany have organised the ANTIFA (Anti-Fascist Action) which is a broad based action group of the far-left. This serves as a rallying point for the divergent groups. The Left in Germany is experiencing a dark time as all the ills of the GDR are blamed on "40 years of Communism". The far-left is in a state of disarray. The Anti-Fascist movements serve as a great focus for the far-left but once again the ideological battle is being left on the back burner.

DASHED HOPES AND MISDIRECTED ANGER

In an historical sense fascism has been portrayed as a religion. During a crisis in capitalism people start to turn towards extremes and, as Mussolini succinctly put it, "if fascism were not a faith how could it give its adherents stoicism and courage". Fascism draws towards it the unquestioning, those who seek a seemingly radical solution to their problems. Fascism actively seeks the youth by exalting them and saying they has a special role to play in the upheaval against the "has-beens" of the world. For some east Germans who have seen the horror of their old state and had their hopes dashed in the newly unified Germany, the far-right is seen by them as having the radical solution.

The growth of the ultra-right in Germany is demonstrated in Universities by the right-wing fraternities known as "Burschenschaften" which are enjoying a revival. These

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BRITAIN

In Britain where you have three anti-fascist organisations, the Anti-Racist Alliance, the Anti-Nazi League and Anti-Fascist Action, you only have one fair sized fascist party the British National Party. The Anti-Nazi League has risen like a phoenix from the flames. The reason for its resurrection was to ensure “the growth of the far right in Europe ...does not give strength and confidence to Nazi organisations in this country”. Unfortunately however, with the recent poor showing of the BNP in the local elections it would be rather more truthful to say that the ANL were set up by the Socialist Workers Party as a focus around which to rally and recruit new members during a period of low levels of class struggle.

The Anti-Racist Alliance is led by Black professionals with the support of various liberals and former Stalinists. It sees itself as a leadership and ‘voice’ for the victims of racism. It places no particular importance on getting people involved in activity.

Anti-Fascist Action, unlike the other two organisations, is committed to preventing the fascists openly recruiting. They are prepared to physically oppose BNP and NF meetings and marches. They also recognise that physical confrontation is only part of the anti-fascist struggle, their ideas must also be defeated.

The threat of a growth of fascism in Britain seems very small. In the recent local elections no single candidate received more than 1,310 votes. Out of 13 BNP candidates, only two received more than 2% of the vote in their constituency. The National Front fared even worse with the highest vote for one of their 14 candidates being 675. What needs to be combated is the racism which leads to a higher number of race related attacks each year. Unless energies are used in such a way as to make racism unacceptable then anti-fascists will always be chasing the same fascists around areas like Tower Hamlets or Bethnal Green.

LE PEN'S PROGRAMME UNFOLDS

It is on the back of such open and obvious hostility to immigrants (e.g. 300 riot police storming a hostel and arresting 168 people, deporting 19 of them within 24 hours. This was under a 'Socialist' government) that Le Pen and his mob can now raise more openly extremist politics. The obvious growth of the FN in the polls can be related to the racists rolling in behind them. However new FN policy against the Veil law (legalised abortion) is shown in their slogan "kill the infant and you kill France".

They are also campaigning "against the right to strike". In this campaign Le Pen said that "the strike is a weapon against the workers". Here he is obviously trying to lead his already racist flock down the murky path towards fascism. It will be interesting to see if he loses some of his support or if more of the disenfranchised join his ranks. In France, as everywhere else, the Left has weakened. In a country which was buoyant with hopes when the Socialists took power in 1982 the people then went on to see the same party propose Bernard Tappie (multi-millionaire and owner of Marsiellies Football Club) on the 'Socialist' ticket for election.

There has been large demonstrations against the Front National on the streets of Paris, Nice, Brest, Lyon, Nancy Dijon and other centres. The demonstrations may well have been strong and morale-boosting for the participants. However, the only real way to dispose of the FN is to erode their support by combating their openly racist politics. You have to expose their ideas as racist and unacceptable in order to destroy the support which Le Pen and the FN now have.

"What is Fascism, at bottom, but the direct product of the failure to achieve socialism?"

Daniel Guerin wrote the above words in 1945 when the classic example of fascism had been defeated. However unlike others he was not naive enough to believe that fascism was defeated once and for all. A certain fact remains true to today, that in a period when capitalism is experiencing a crisis we are once again observing a rise in fascist politics across Europe. The politics are initially racist to begin with but more recently we see that less and less shame is being attached to waving Swastikas or giving a fascist salute.

This is mainly due to the revised History which is being spewed out by people like David Irving. Irving, the supposed historian, likes to espouse ideas that Hitler "an ordinary, walking, talking human being" was unaware of the systematic slaughter of nearly six million Jews. Irving's output, coupled along with such views of history as "Did Six Million Really Die" by Richard Verall, means that the Nazi heritage can be revealed with less shame and more perverse pride by the far-right in Germany.

Nazi Germany in the 1930s and early 1940s demonstrated the reality of fascism. Today the fascists are not on the way to taking state power anywhere in the world. However this does not mean that they can be safely ignored. Tapping into widespread discontent, they are providing the leadership and stimulus for growing racist hatred and terror. They represent an immediate threat to immigrants and minorities like lesbians and gays. Should they continue to grow they will pose a major threat to all working class and left-wing organisations.

RACISM AND ROSTOCK

The task in Europe is to combat racism, to oppose it in all its manifestations. This is what the victims of racist oppression need, and this is what can deny the fascists the possibility of a mass base. Fighting the specifically fascist groups, and stopping their activities and recruitment drives is necessary. But the fight against racism, both institutional and otherwise, is the main component of the struggle.

The German town of Rostock recently became infamous as we witnessed pictures of neo-nazi youth hurling petrol bombs at the asylum hostel containing mostly Bulgarian and Romanian refugees. One local activist in Germany reported the following. "On Sunday night, a line of riot police could not prevent a second night of attacks, this time by nazi youths armed with molotov cocktails. It seemed the nazis were very well organized. Christian Worch of the far-right 'National List' party from Hamburg was on hand to provide leadership, and neo-nazi cadres with walky-talkies (and even police radios!) helped provide organization. The obvious lack of police intervention made it clear that at least some elements within the police force were quietly sympathetic, or may even have aided in preparations for the neo-nazi attacks. This became clearer when 100 anti-fascists were brutally dispersed as they arrived on the scene. At least 60 local anti-fascists were arrested in Rostock on Sunday night, many were placed in prison cells full of neo-nazis. Obviously the cops wanted to see them get the shit kicked out of them."

However what was the reaction of the German politicians to the events of Rostock, Ketzin and Leverkusen? The Social Democrats dropped their opposition to a change in the right of asylum for the politically persecuted. This now means that Article 16(II)2 — which was included in the German Basic Law out of responsibility for the many refugees who fled from the Nazis in the 1930's — is likely to be fully undermined. This

seems a strange way to combat the rise of the far-right and their racist attacks on refugees.

FRANCE

In France Le Pen's Front National received 13.9% of the vote in elections in March. In 1984 (Orwellian irony) the FN received 2,204,961 in the European elections. At this present FN has a presence on every regional council in France. Le Pen and his party have made very significant gains from the time 10 years previously when he could not muster the 500 signatures needed to run for the presidential election. These gains have been made over the last ten years when the 'Socialists' were in power in France. Over this time racism has become an acceptable part of the political culture.

The so-called Socialist government talked of the "necessity" of setting up detention centres in all ports and airports. The mayor of Chavieu Chavagnon, near Lyons, bulldozed a local mosque with 12 worshippers inside in 1989. Mr Dezenpte (the mayor) boasts that his efforts have more than halved the local Moslem population. Yet, Dezenpte is not a member of the FN, he is in the Gaullist RPR (who vote with Fianna Fáil in the EC parliament). He was re-elected mayor, trouncing the local FN candidate, getting 66.7% of the vote.

This is just an example to indicate how racism has become an endemic part of the established Parties' politics in France. The racist agenda being set by the politicians has led to a broader acceptance of the policies advocated by the Front National. Recent polls in France showed that 84% "understand" racist reactions and 75% in one poll thought that there was "too many Arabs in France".