

Sixty Thousand Fascists March in Warsaw

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Global Research, November 14, 2017

[World Socialist Web Site](#)

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On Saturday, November 11, at least 60,000 fascist demonstrators from Poland, Hungary and Slovakia gathered in Warsaw, the Polish capital, on Poland's "Independence Day" to stage what has been described as the biggest far-right demonstration since the fall of Nazism. Some estimates suggested as many as 100,000 participants.

The rally was organized by a variety of far-right groups, including the Polish National-Radical Camp, the National Movement and the All Polish Youth, all of which are anti-Semitic and white supremacist. The historical antecedents of these forces were responsible for violent anti-Semitic pogroms in the 1930s, and helped the Nazis hunt down Jews during the German occupation, even when they themselves were persecuted by the Nazis.

Slogans at the rally effectively called for an ethnic purge of Europe. Banners read: "White Europe of Brotherly Peoples," "Europe will be White or Depopulated," "Pure Poland, White Poland!" "Death to the Enemies of the Fatherland," "Pray for Islamic Holocaust," and "Refugees, Get Out!" Marchers waved Polish flags and carried burning torches. Some also displayed the falanga, the main symbol of Polish fascism.

Thousands of fascists and ultra-nationalists travelled from other countries to attend the march, including from Sweden, Hungary and Slovakia. The well-known American white supremacist Richard Spencer was invited to speak at the rally but was apparently banned by the Polish government from traveling to the country.

Nothing about this demonstration was spontaneous or accidental. It was a carefully planned provocation and show of strength by the Eastern European far-right, aimed at intimidating everyone opposed to the right-wing shift in European and international politics and the ever more feverish war preparations. It was consciously staged in a city that was all but destroyed in 1944 by the German Wehrmacht, and whose Jewish population was wiped out in Auschwitz and Treblinka. Poland suffered some five million losses under Nazi occupation, three million of them Jews, and was the main site of the industrial extermination of European Jewry.

The fascist forces that have now unabashedly and provocatively shown themselves in Warsaw have been strengthened and even armed, by both right-wing governments in Europe, and US imperialism.

The slogan of the demonstration was "We Want God," the words from an old religious Polish song that US President Donald Trump quoted during his July visit to Warsaw. As the WSWS noted at the time, Trump was deliberately whipping up fascist sentiments and religious bigotry in a speech that implied support for anti-Semitism, nationalism, Catholicism and white supremacy.

Moreover, during this visit, Trump signaled the full support of the White House for Polish Law and Justice (PiS) government plans to build a so called Intermarium (between the seas) alliance of states in Eastern Europe, directed against both Russia and Germany. Historically, attempts to build such an alliance were always centered in Poland, which has thus sought to become a regional power, while relying on fascist and ultra-nationalist formations in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, Romania, and Slovakia. It is these forces to whom Trump appealed in his speech, and they understood it very well.

Even before the Trump administration took office, the US government had worked to strengthen the far right throughout Eastern Europe, most notably in Ukraine. The US-orchestrated coup in Kiev in February 2014 critically relied on the country's fascist forces. They have been given almost free reign in the ongoing civil war that has ravaged the country ever since. Formations such as the Azov Battalion, which played a major role in the coup, have been employed to fight separatist troops in eastern Ukraine and terrorize the local population. Like so many far-right groups in the region, the Azov battalion openly advocates a resurrection of the Intermarium alliance.

The Law and Justice government in Warsaw has done its part to strengthen the far right ever since it won a parliamentary majority in the fall of 2015. It has constantly promoted xenophobia, anti-Semitism, nationalism and militarism. Moreover, there are an estimated 400,000 people involved in paramilitary organizations dominated by far-right ideologies in Poland, a country with a population of less than 40 million. The Defense Ministry has undertaken to arm these forces and integrate them into a paramilitary militia that is being established parallel and, to some extent, in opposition to, the country's regular armed forces.

It is thus no accident that the Polish Interior Minister Mariusz Błaszczak praised the demonstration:

"It was a beautiful sight. We are proud that so many Poles have decided to take part in a celebration connected to the Independence Day holiday."

Other sections of the Polish government, including the Foreign Ministry, issued similar statements.

Polish President Andrzej Duda condemned the demonstration, arguing that there was no room for xenophobia and nationalism in Poland. Under conditions of growing social and political opposition to the PiS government, Duda has tried to distance himself from the government's policies over the past year. But he too is responsible. Not only has he played a key role in propping up the PiS-government by playing the role of a mediating buffer between the government and the opposition. He was also one of the first to proclaim the building of an Intermarium-style alliance as official governmental policy when elected president in the summer of 2015.

The resurgence of the far-right in Eastern Europe, which was the site of some of the greatest crimes in the history of humanity, perpetrated by the German National Socialists and their local fascist allies, is a stark warning to the international working class. As in the 1930s, the bourgeoisie is preparing for war and the suppression of social revolution by building up the far right.

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