

Communist Party of Britain

international bulletin



Victory over fascism
Don't let it rise again

▲ A Soviet soldier hoists the hammer and sickle over the Reichstag in ruined Berlin



▲ Communist International leader Georgi Dimitroff challenges his Nazi prosecutors depicted here in John Heartfield's famous photomontage

ON 8 MAY 1945 the wartime allies, Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States, declared victory over fascism in Europe. Approximately 50 million people had been killed in the war – half of them civilians and almost half within the borders of the Soviet Union. Many millions died in the concentration camps: Communists, Socialists, all those opposing fascism and up to six million Jews, Roma and gays, victims of a hate-filled ideology designed to divide working people.

The Victory of 8 May 1945 was celebrated with the pledge that fascism would never again be allowed to rise.

Yet today fascist parties are again on the rise. This folder examines the circumstances that led to the development of fascism, how its rise was financed by those seeking to defend an old, corrupt and exploitative order, how in the 1940s it was suppressed – and why today its renewed rise must be defeated at all costs.

How fascism originated

The term 'fascism' came from Italy. In the turmoil that followed the first world war and the Russian Revolution, when workers sought to take over factories and peasants occupy land, big business owners and landlords gave financial and military support to an alliance of right-wing and fascist parties led by Mussolini. In 1922 he seized power. His movement's rise was marked by three features. The use of paramilitary forces to terrorise. The appeal to workers using a mixture of racism and populism – adopting and twisting some socialist slogans. And its subsequent creation of a state which it described as 'totalitarian' – in which all organisations, from trade unions to schools, cultural organisations and the press came under central 'Fascist' control – taking its name from 'fasces', the symbol of authority of Ancient Rome. Capitalism continued. Big business flourished. And the Italian state fed its needs by external aggression across the Adriatic and in Africa.

White Terror

However, although the name came from Italy, the same characteristics marked a whole series of movements after 1918. The British and French-backed White military regimes in Southern Russia and Ukraine sought to create a base of support among extreme nationalists by unleashing anti-Semitic pogroms. Over 200,000 died. In Finland the German-backed military dictator General Mannerheim had rounded up tens of thousands of Communists and Socialists in concentration camps in 1918-19. In 1919, after the Hungarian Soviet Republic had been overthrown by the French-officered troops of the Royal Romanian army, Admiral Horthy was installed as Regent of Hungary amid a White Terror aimed at socialists and Jews. In 1923 an extreme right-wing movement seized power in Bulgaria, overthrowing a peasant-socialist alliance and again instituting a White terror.

George V awards Mussolini an honorary knighthood



This first wave of fascist regimes secured military, financial and diplomatic backing from Europe's dominant imperialist powers, particularly France and Britain. George V awarded Mussolini the Order of the Bath in 1923. The object was to halt the spread of socialism to the west and crush the upsurge of workers' movements seeking to establish socialist governments following the Russian Revolution.

Massive financial aid from big business

A second wave of fascist coups took place in the aftermath of the massive financial crisis of 1931 – when mass unemployment again brought demands for socialist transformation and electoral support for Communists and Socialists. Salazar seized power in Portugal in 1932, Hitler in Germany in 1932-33 and Franco in Spain in 1936-39 – where the Spanish people defended their elected left-wing government through four long years of struggle. Hitler's Nazis received massive financial aid from German big business, exposed by the Nuremberg trials in 1945. In Spain Franco only won because of military intervention by the fascist regimes in Italy and Germany – and a blockade by Britain and France.

Georgi Dimitroff and resistance to fascism

Georgi Dimitroff, previously a Communist MP in Bulgaria and leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party then exiled in Germany, was arrested when the Nazis seized power. He was falsely charged with burning the Reichstag.

On trial his exposure of Nazi tactics in the dock gripped world opinion and forced his release. Later in 1935, as general secretary of the Communist International, he provided the classic definition of fascism and how it was to be resisted.

Open terrorist dictatorship

It was, he wrote, 'the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of

finance capital'. It was not, despite its rhetoric, a new state 'over and above capitalism'. It was not, despite its main base of support, a product of the economic despair of the lower middle class. It was a tool of the dominant sector of big business – once it was unable to secure its rule in any other way, when it faced acute economic crisis and needed to attack the working class and seize new sources of super profit through external aggression. He also made the point, very relevant today, that fascism did not appear from nowhere. Its way was prepared. Previous governments of the right and far right had already given respectability to extreme nationalism. Racist scapegoating had been allowed to secure a base within the working class. Then, but only then, big business had the option of turning to fascism when faced with profound economic and political crisis.

Champion the progressive history of every nation

He therefore called for a United Front of the Left. Left social democracy, Communists and democrats had to combine to rally working people for a progressive, class-based alternative, to defend democratic institutions, to champion oppressed national minorities, to mobilise and organise. He also stressed that this alliance had to address the roots of fascism, its ability manipulate history, to magnify national grievance and suppress all progressive elements in a nation's past, to destroy the knowledge that every gain and benefit for working people had been won by challenging class oppression.

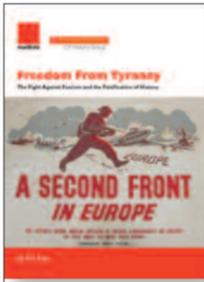
Dimitroff's arguments laid the basis for the Popular Front. Across Europe such class-based unity mobilised the peoples of France and, for a long period, Spain in their fight against fascism. It ultimately laid the basis for the alliance that secured victory in 1945.

Georgi Dimitroff:
'the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital'

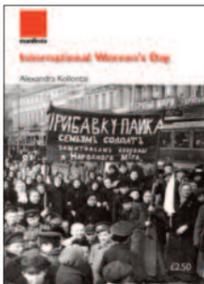
Laying of flowers on the Soviet War Memorial

Wednesday 9 May at 10:45am flowers will be laid at the Soviet War Memorial near the Imperial War Museum in London (address: Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ)

CONTINUED



▲ **Freedom From Tyranny** The fight against fascism and the falsification of history by Phil Katz commemorates the 65th anniversary of the defeat of fascism in Europe is a celebration of that victory and also a warning of the continuing dangers posed by fascism and the attempts to re-write history. £5.95 (£1.50 p&p) 114pp illustrated



▲ **Alexandra Kollontai** (1872–1952) was an active socialist and fighter for women's rights in Russia from 1899. She joined the Bolsheviks in 1915. The only woman member of the Bolshevik central committee, she also served as Commissar of Welfare and head of the Women's Section of the Bolshevik Party. £2.50 (+£1.50 p&p)



▲ **The Empire and Ukraine** by Andrew Murray sets the Ukraine crisis in its global and local context, and draws the lessons needed for the anti-war movement as great power conflict returns to Europe and threatens a new cold war or worse. Murray examines the fascist forces activated in Ukraine and explores the essential links between the crises of contemporary capitalism and war. £11.95 (+£1.50 p&p)



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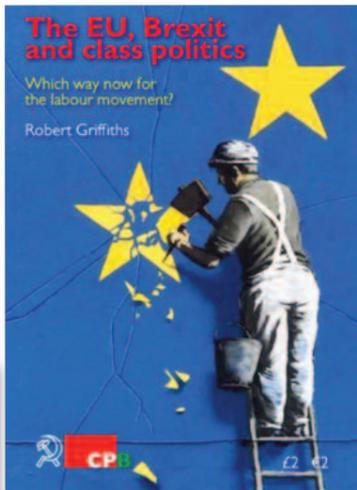
Workers of all lands, unite!

A labour movement policy on migration, labour and refugees



▲ **Workers of all land, unite!** sets out what should be a labour movement policy on migration, labour and refugees. These issues of have been kept at the centre of the political debate by reactionary elements in the media, the main political parties and the state. This has been particularly the case in the run-up to, and since, the referendum decision of the British people to exit the EU. This continual barrage has fostered perceptions that Britain is being 'swamped' by migrant ethnic groups and nationalities, that immigrants and asylum-seekers are 'bogus' and receive privileged access to public and welfare services. It has also helped the growth of fascist and right-wing xenophobic organisations, although these remain small and largely ignored by working class people.

Both xenophobic attitudes, and the calls for 'no borders', help conceal the role played by the capitalist state and by capital itself, which is the direct cause of war and most of the economic and social problems afflicting the working class across the world – problems that lie at the heart of mass migration. £2



SINGLE MARKET THREAT

THE LABOUR movement should beware the drive to present continuing alignment with the EU Single Market as a 'unifying' post-Brexit policy, Britain's communists have warned.

General secretary Robert Griffiths branded it "a 'one-nation' Tory and big business approach that would obstruct the progressive policies of a future Labour government."

EU single-market rules enforced by the overbearing EU Commission and the unaccountable European Central Bank would not only stop Britain negotiating its own economic relations with other developed and third-world countries, but would also restrict or outlaw many of the measures in Labour's general-election manifesto he said.

Single-market rules are at odds with state-backed infrastructure investment, aid for industry, VAT reform, fairer public procurement policies, renationalisation of the railways and water supply and a regulated labour market that puts an end to super-exploitation.

The party reiterated its support for a 'people's exit' from the EU, with no submission to EU single-market rules, a minimum divorce bill and regulation of the movement of capital and labour rather than a 'capitalist free market to maximise corporate profit'. ★

▲ **The EU, Brexit and class politics** Which way for the labour movement? by Robert Griffiths £2

www.comunist-party.org.uk/shop/

The war to defeat fascism

The Nazis launched a series of annexations: Saarland in 1936, Austria in 1938 and Czechoslovakia in 1939. These took place without significant opposition from Britain's Tory-led government. British big business had a series of cartel agreements with their German counterparts in chemicals, steel and synthetics. The privately-owned Bank of England, representing Britain's merchant banks, had close links with the German Reichsbank and supplied gold cover until the week before the outbreak of war. More directly to the point, Britain's interwar economy, and the ability of its big companies to escape the worst effects of the great depression, depended on its vast empire. Big business and the Tory government knew that any war with the Germany would force Britain into economic reliance on the US. The economic terms demanded by the US, eventually imposed in 1942, were access to empire markets and the dismantling of empire protection. This was the real reason for Britain's appeasement of Germany.



British appeasement of Nazi Germany

Both the US and the Soviet Union sought to conclude an anti-fascist alliance including Britain and France in 1938-39. Britain refused. The policy of the Chamberlain government remained, even after the formal declaration of war in 1939, to secure an understanding with Germany to turn east against the Soviet Union. In July 1939 discussions were initiated about a non-aggression pact. It was after this that the Soviet Union began similar negotiations with Germany. Its object was to gain time for full re-armament. Chamberlain's government continued negotiations with Germany, via Mussolini, until the invasion of France in May 1940.

The Soviet people bear the brunt

The wartime anti-fascist alliance finally came into being in 1941 when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in July and Japan attacked the US in December. Throughout the subsequent struggle it was the Soviet Union that bore the brunt. A minimum of 8.6 million Soviet military personnel were killed – compared with 300,000 British, 200,000 French and 400,000 US. It was the Red Army that captured the Nazi headquarters in Berlin, liberated the great majority of concentration camps and freed the countries of eastern and central Europe under Nazi occupation. Over 4 million German soldiers died on the Eastern front; 350,000 elsewhere. Unlike 1914-1917, when the Tsarist armies crumbled, the Soviet people united to protect socialism and defeat fascism.

Right wing populism on the rise again

Over the past two decades, but particularly since the financial crisis of 2008, Europe has seen a rise in support for populist right-wing parties. In Austria the right-wing Popular Party is in a government coalition with the anti-immigrant populist Freedom Party. Together they won 57 per cent of the vote in 2017. In the French presidential election the right-wing populist Front National candidate Marine Le Pen gained 33 per cent. In Italy in 2018 the anti-immigrant populist League won 18 per cent of the vote and is in government coalition with the Five Star movement. In Germany in 2017 the anti-immigrant populist Alternative for Germany won 13 per cent of the vote – as did the Freedom Party in the Netherlands. In the 2018 Hungarian elections the right-wing

populist People's Party of Victor Orban secured 48 per cent of the vote and the anti-immigrant and extreme right-wing Jobbik 20 per cent. In Poland the right-wing authoritarian Law and Justice Party secured 37 per cent and a majority of seats in the 2015 election. Also in 2015 the fascist New Dawn secured 7 per cent in Greece, the True Finns, a radical right-wing populist party, secured 20 per cent of the vote in Finland and a UKIP, a radical populist party seeking to mobilise an anti-immigrant vote, secured 12 per cent in Britain.

EU makes working people pay for the banking crisis

Few of these parties took an openly fascist position although most do contain members with fascist backgrounds. All were to a greater or lesser degree anti-immigrant, anti-Moslem and proponents of a right-wing authoritarian nationalism. Most secured a majority of their support from within the working class. Most did so in circumstances where the EU response to banking crisis had created mass unemployment, cut key elements of social support and enforced neo-liberal flexicurity and where, no less significant, those imposing these policies were the previously dominant social democratic parties. In France, Italy, Greece, Poland, the Netherlands and to an extent Austria and Germany the rise of right-wing populist parties was accompanied by the collapse of the working class base of social democracy.



The base is being created for a new fascist offensive

In no country in Europe could it be said that fascism is dominant. It is nearest in Ukraine where neo-Nazi paramilitaries patrol streets, have entry to government and receive massive funding from oligarch clans. And in Ukraine also there can be no doubt that US imperialism did use fascist violence to secure regime change in the 2014 coup. But the current regime is not itself fascist. There is no need for it. Across Europe in general there is presently no direct challenge to the state power of finance capital. In no country does finance capital, either external or internal, currently require an open terrorist dictatorship to enforce its rule or to mobilise support for external aggression. But, as in the 1920s, a base is being created. Capitalism's financial crisis remains unresolved. Tensions between the US and EU are rising. China is seen as a serious threat. Violent rhetoric is increasing.

The ground is being prepared



The attack on working class resistance is three-fold. The first is the attack on social democracy. For over a generation after the war most working people identified with a social democratic ideology of working class solidarity. The neo-liberal transformation of social democracy has gravely undermined it. Second, right-wing authoritarian governments are attacking trade union organisation, the basis for working class resistance.

National history being rewritten

Third, as Dimitrov warned, there is a rewriting of national history. This targets what the ideologists of capitalism see as the biggest threat: the memory that across much of eastern and central Europe, in Italy, Germany and France, big business collaborated with fascism. Only Communists and their Social Democratic and Popular Front comrades resisted. And, no less significant if a renewed financial crisis strikes, people may remember that socialism in Eastern Europe, whatever its weaknesses, did provide a welfare state, full employment and a high measure of social equality and did so for two generations after the last war. For capital this history is dangerous. It is now being obliterated.

The EU equates communism with fascism

In Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia it is illegal to display the 'symbols of Communism' because of their 'anti-national' character. In Ukraine it is illegal even to sell the works of Karl Marx. Soviet war memorials are being replaced by statues of those who collaborated with the Nazis in the massacre of Jews. In much of Eastern Europe the fascists who destroyed workers' liberties have become national saviours. In modified form this offensive is being carried forward throughout Europe by a drive to equate Communism with Fascism. The Council of Europe did so in 2005. In 2008 the Council of the EU followed suit by describing both as totalitarian – establishing a joint day of remembrance for victims of fascism and communism and in 2011 an EU financed educational programme.

These moves took place in the midst of an EU's response to financial crisis that inflicted unprecedented hardship on working people and created the conditions for the rise of xenophobia and racism. The purpose of its equation of Communism and Fascism is clear. It directly conceals the origins of fascism within the capitalist economic system: that it is the way monopoly capitalism operates, its crises and its requirement for super profit that, at a certain stage, creates the need for a brutal attack on the working class and external aggression against other countries. At it same it also obliterates the historic role of Socialists and Communists in rallying the exploited. Ideologically, it lays the basis, should finance capital need it, for fascism once again to be used as its tool.

Commemorate the victory over fascism by understanding its causes and consequences

"Fascism is a historic phase of capitalism; in this sense it is something new and at the same time old. In Fascist countries capitalism continues to exist, but only in the form of Fascism; and Fascism can be combated as capitalism alone, as the nakedest, most shameless, most oppressive, and most treacherous form of capitalism. How can anyone tell the truth about Fascism, unless he is willing to speak out against capitalism, which brings it forth?"

Bertolt Brecht 1935

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