

Polish government officials march with the far-right

Clara Weiss

13 November 2018

On Sunday, officials of the Law and Justice (PiS) government made a point of marching alongside neo-fascist forces to celebrate Poland's 100th Independence Day. The "March of Independence" in Warsaw attracted some 250,000 people, according to the Polish police. This would make it the largest single march in the history of Warsaw, a city of 2 million people. Smaller demonstrations took place throughout the country.

On November 11, 1918, Poland was officially granted independence from what was then Soviet Russia, Germany and Austria. This followed some 123 years during which the country, formerly the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, was partitioned between the Habsburg Empire, the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia. In the ensuing 21 years, up to the Nazi invasion in 1939, Poland became a major bulwark of French and US imperialism in their struggle against the Soviet Union.

For many years, the anniversary of this date has been exploited by Polish nationalists and fascists. However, Independence Day has also been claimed by other forces across the political spectrum, including the liberal opposition, which has long joined in the glorification of the authoritarian Piłsudski regime that ruled Poland for much of the inter-war period.

Last year, November 11 was the occasion for an internationally organized gathering of far-right forces. With about 60,000 participants, including white supremacists from the US and Europe, it was the largest far-right march in post-World War II European history. Banners at the rally, which sent shockwaves throughout the world, included: "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!" (see: "Sixty thousand fascists march in Warsaw")

The announcement that government officials, including President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, would join the march with far-right nationalist groups such as the National Radical Camp (ONR), came only on Friday. The ONR is an openly neo-fascist organization. It is named after the organization in the inter-war period most closely linked to the fascist terror against both workers' organizations and Jews that swept Poland in the 1930s. Before the Nazis invaded Poland, the ONR distinguished itself by its fascination with and admiration for Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany, particularly its anti-Jewish policies, which inspired the ONR's own political program.

Another co-organizer was the far-right All-Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska), also named after an inter-war youth and student organization of the same name, which was responsible for anti-Semitic assaults and murders at universities. On its Twitter feed, the organization posted a picture of its procession with the comment "Life and Death for the Nation."

Government officials had reportedly tried to form a coalition of organizers that would have included the government, the liberal opposition and the far-right. However, that failed and the liberal opposition parties ended up boycotting the march. An attempt last week by Warsaw's outgoing mayor, from the opposition party Civic Platform (PO), to ban the march was thwarted by a court decision.

The participation of Duda and Morawiecki in the march was also meant to underscore the fact that they were staying away from the celebrations of the end of World War I in Paris that same day.

Military police were deployed to protect the marchers, and Polish soldiers stood side-by-side with

members of the ONR and the Italian neo-Nazi party Forza Nuova. At the beginning of the march, Duda addressed the far-right crowd, saying: “I want us to walk under our white-and-red banners together [the colors of Poland’s national flag] and with an air of joy. To give honour to those who fought for Poland and to be glad that it is free, sovereign and independent.” He then led the crowd in chants of “Glory and praise to the heroes” and sang the national anthem with them.

Most participants carried Polish flags, but some also displayed the falanga, a symbol of European fascism in the 1930s and the main symbol of the ONR, as well as white supremacist symbols such as the Celtic cross. Racist chants were reported. At one point, an EU flag was reportedly burned by rightists shouting, “Down with the European Union.”

Spokespeople for Duda and the government tried to downplay the involvement of far-right forces in the march, but it is clear that the open alignment of the government with the far-right was a calculated political move. It was encouraged by the general lurch to the right by the entire ruling class in Europe, and is aimed at intimidating workers and youth in Poland and Europe who are opposed to the policies of war and austerity of the bourgeoisie.

A few days before the PiS announced that it would march with the far-right, French President Emmanuel Macron hailed the fascist dictator of the collaborationist Vichy regime during the Second World War, Philippe Pétain, as a “great soldier.” In neighbouring Germany, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) enjoys close ties with leading circles in the state. It has been promoted by the entire media and political establishment and placed in the official position of leading opposition party in parliament. In the US, the Trump administration has systematically encouraged far-right racism and anti-Semitism, resulting in several violent attacks before the midterm elections, including the massacre of 11 people at a Pittsburgh Synagogue.

In Poland, the PiS has for years encouraged the far-right and integrated it into the state apparatus. A huge paramilitary militia has been created under the supervision of Defence Minister Antoni Macierewicz, himself a notorious anti-Semite. This force relies largely on the organized far-right.

The government has promoted anti-Semitism and racism toward refugees for years. Earlier this year, it

passed a law censoring speech on the Holocaust that mentions the involvement of Polish nationalists in the murder of the Jews. Most recently, a leaked tape brought to light anti-Semitic remarks by Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki dating from 2014.

Beyond a significant overlap of political views, the PiS government relies on the far-right for its preparations for war against Russia and the suppression of the working class at home. With the support of the Trump administration, it is pursuing a revival of the “Intermarium” strategy of the inter-war period, in which the Piłsudski regime, with the support of sections of the French and British elites, sought to undermine both the Soviet Union and Germany through an alliance of right-wing nationalist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe. Similarly today, with the support of US imperialism, the PiS government seeks to build an alliance of far-right regimes throughout Eastern Europe to counter the threat of revolution, undermine Germany’s position in Europe and prepare for war against Russia.

There is widespread hatred of fascism among workers and youth throughout Europe, including in Poland, which was turned into a center of fascist terror and destruction under the Nazi occupation during World War II. Poland was the geographical center of the genocide of 6 million European Jews, over 3 million of whom had lived in Poland before the war.

Within the framework of the current political system, however, this opposition to war and fascism finds virtually no expression. In order to fight the preparations for war and civil war by the bourgeoisie and its promotion of the far-right, workers and youth need to turn to an internationalist and socialist program.



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