

Reading Group: Fascism and Fighting the Far Right Today

Three part discussion on the history and nature of fascism and how to fight it today

Main readings:

- SWP (UK) Pamphlet *Fighting Fascism and the Far Right Today* <https://swp.org.uk/pamphlets/fighting-fascism-and-the-far-right-today/>
- Trotsky **For a Workers' United Front Against Fascism**, Dec. 1931 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/germany/1931/311208.htm>
- Contemporary articles on the far-right under Trump and today. (below)

First session, Sun. February 14th

In the first session will be historical, and briefly discuss the nature of fascist movements and fascist (military coups. We will look at the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, and Trotsky's conception of a United Front.

- Read from the [Fighting Fascism pamphlet](#): Introduction (4 pages); Chapter 1 "What Is Fascism" pages 7-11; Chapter 3 "Lessons from the Past" (1930s) pages 21-25, 28. Feel free to read the whole pamphlet through, but we will be discussing these historical sections first, and the more recent examples later.
- Read Leon Trotsky's "[For a Worker's United Front Against Fascism](#)" from 1931.

Optional supplementary reading for section one:

- Clara Zetkin, "The Struggle Against Fascism," (1923) <https://www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/1923/06/struggle-against-fascism.html>
- Any more of Trotsky from the period (selections in [Fascism: What It Is and How to Fight It](#)).
- David Karvala "Antifa – The origins of classic antifascism and its red flag" <https://theleftberlin.wordpress.com/current-debates/antifa-%E2%80%A2-the-origins-of-classic-antifascism-and-its-red-flag/>
- For more on the "**Popular Front**" as distinct from the United Front, see section on "The Popular Front" in [Joseph Choonara's article on "The United Front."](#)

Second session, Sun. February 21st

We will be discussion later implementations of the united front and strategies for fighting fascism, from the Battle of Cable street. We will have a member of the original Anti-Nazi league in the UK help introduce, and also discuss the recent fight against Golden Dawn in Greece.

- Read the remaining sections of the [Fighting Fascism...](#) pamphlet.

Optional supplementary reading for section two:

- **The Anti Nazi League and its lessons for today**, Paul Holborow, *International Socialism*, 2019. <https://isj.org.uk/the-anti-nazi-league/>
- **How we smashed Golden Dawn**, Interview with Petros Constantinou by Mark Thomas, *International Socialism*, 2021. <https://isj.org.uk/how-we-smashed-golden-dawn/>

Third session, Sun. March 8th

We will be discussion fascism today, how to characterize the new hybrid electoral parties in Europe, how that model compares to the United States, and concentrating on the rise of the far-right in the US under Trump and after, with an eye on strategies of combatting them, and the role of socialists within that.

- We will read from various short, contemporary articles on the far-right under Trump and today. These give a range of left responses and are meant to be read critically, in light of the previous readings. Examples:
 - **“The Year in Hate and Extremism, 2020,”** Janik & Hanks, Southern Poverty Law Center, Feb. 1, 2021. <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2021/02/01/year-hate-2020> (overview based on the SPLC’s quantitative tracking of “hate groups,” and attitude polling. They give mainstream recommendations based on state action, with no role for anti-fascism).
 - **“2020 was a record year for far right violence in the U.S.”** Spencer Sunshine, *Salon* 1/2/21. https://www.salon.com/2021/01/02/2020-was-a-record-year-for-far-right-violence-in-the-us_partner (A right-wing watcher’s year-end roundup of background details on the ups and downs of individual far-right groups, their propensity to violence, with brief note on splits over Trumpism vs outright Fascism. No discussion of what to do to counter them).
 - **“Seven Theses on the Post-Trump Right and the DSA’s Role in the Fight Ahead,”** DSA Santa Cruz Executive Committee, 1/09/21 <https://dsasantacruz.org/articles/the-post-trump-right/> (recent socialist analysis of Capitol riots and threat from fascist organizing post-Trump, and a specific call to the Democratic Socialists of America to get involved in opposing it).
 - **“Stopping the growth of the far right: Labour must be there,”** Carolyn Egan, *Socialist Worker* (Canada), 2/4/21. <http://www.socialist.ca/node/4263> (very short recent statement from Canada on involvement of unions, along with Mosques, the left, and others, in broad-based organizing against the far right).

Other optional reading for section three:

- **Fascism in Europe Today**, Mark L Thomas, *International Socialism*, 2019. <https://isj.org.uk/fascism-in-europe-today>
- **“The Antifa Movement Today,”** David Karvala, <http://davidkarvala.blogspot.com/2019/09/the-Tantifa-movement-today.html>

Further Reading

Books:

- Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, Vintage, 2005.
- Leon Trotsky, *Fascism, Stalinism, and the United Front*, Bookmarks, 1989.
- Daniel Guérin, *Fascism and Big Business* (1938), Pathfinder, 1973 ([PDF](#)).
- Jim Wolfreys, *Republic of Islamophobia: The Rise of Respectable Racism in France*, Hurst, 2018.
- David Karvala, *El antifascismo del 99%*, *Ediciones de la Tempestad*, Barcelona, 2019.

The Holocaust: *In the most extreme example of the horrors of fascism, between 1939 and 1945, six million Jews, at least 250,000 Roma, and tens of thousands of LGBT people and people with mental illness or disability were massacred in death camps in Germany and Nazi-occupied eastern Europe as part of a program of industrial genocide. There is an informative ongoing debate on Marxist understanding of the Holocaust involving the IS tendency:*

- “German Marxism and the Holocaust”, Donny Gluckstein reviews Horst Haenisch, *Faschismus und der Holocaust: Versuch einer Erklärung* (2018) <http://isj.org.uk/german-marxism-and-the-holocaust/>
- “Capitalism and the Holocaust—the missing link” <https://isj.org.uk/capitalism-and-the-holocaust>
A reply to Donny Gluckstein by Horst Haenisch (2019)
- “Can we understand the Holocaust?” (2020) <https://isj.org.uk/can-we-understand-the-holocaust>
(Henry Maitles reviews Enzo Traverso, *Critique of Modern Barbarism: Essays on Fascism, Anti-Semitism and the Use of History*)
- Alex Callinicos, “Plumbing the Depths: Marxism and the Holocaust,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, volume 14, number 2 (2001)
<https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/callinicos/2001/xx/plumbing.htm>

International Socialism is a source of analysis of historical and contemporary fascism from the I.S. tradition, but so far has had little on the American right. Several of the articles suggested above were from this journal, others include:

- **Divided they fell: the German left and the rise of Hitler**, Florian Wilde, *International Socialism*, 2013. <https://isj.org.uk/divided-they-fell-the-german-left-and-the-rise-of-hitler>
- **What is fascism?**, Jim Wolfreys, *International Socialism*, 2006. <https://isj.org.uk/what-is-fascism> (Review of Robert Paxton’s *The Anatomy of Fascism* [Penguin, 2004], and Michael Mann’s *Fascists* [Cambridge University Press, 2004], discusses debates on the characterization of fascism.
- **The many faces of Marine Le Pen**, Judith Orr, *International Socialism*, 2020. <http://isj.org.uk/many-faces-of-marine-le-pen/>
- **Austria: fascism in government**, David Albrich, *International Socialism*, 2019. <https://isj.org.uk/austria-fascism-in-government>
- **Antisemitism and the far right today**, Rob Ferguson, *International Socialism*, 2017. <https://isj.org.uk/antisemitism-and-the-far-right-today>
- **Women and the far right**, Judith Orr, *International Socialism*, 2019. <https://isj.org.uk/women-and-the-far-right>