

# opinions

## Fascism a modern danger

In a time of mass unemployment, deepening cuts to services, and widespread disarray if not disintegration of the traditional left, the minority of fascists around the globe are becoming emboldened, organizing and trying to grow. All those concerned to protect the rights of people of colour, Jews, women, gays and lesbians, the disabled, trade unionists, left groups and workers as a whole have common cause to prevent fascists from winning any credence for their vicious ideas and practices.

In the short term, failing to do so means that the political climate gets pulled further to the right, when we need an end to Tory policy, not more of it! In fact, the very policies of Tory governments, and some so-called socialist ones, have in turn cultivated the soil for fascist ideas and renewed their confidence, for example by tightening immigration controls, attacking affirmative action quotas, reneging on pay equity and a national daycare program, freezing wages, slashing social services, murdering Somalis. Failing to confront fascists on the move means, more specifically, the injury, homelessness, and death of innocent scapegoats.

In the longer term, the consequences of not challenging fascists when and where they try to mobilize has been shown to us by history in the most horrific manner imaginable: the mass destruction of European Jews (the principal but certainly not the only victims of the Holocaust) by Hitler's regime. It is so important that their attempts to spread and inflict hatred today are met with strong and visible protest in response.

That's why we in the International Socialists (IS), in a united front with over 50 other organizations, are calling for a massive demonstration against one of Europe's leading fascists, scheduled to arrive in Montreal this month. Jean-Yves Gallou, another high ranking member of the National Front (NF) in France, is expected to address an international conference of mayors called "Metropolis '93" during the week of September 19. The *Globe and Mail* has stated that Le Pen himself, leader of the NF, will use the occasion to

speak to fascists in Montreal.

For those who aren't familiar with it, the NF is a fascist party that has won up to 15% of the vote in French elections. Like most modern-day Nazis, Le Pen has tried to deny that the Holocaust ever occurred. He has stated that Hitler's "gas chambers are a mere detail of the Second World War." In the city of Marseilles, the NF has a "security service" which concentrates on beating up immigrants. Le Pen's party has also been implicated in the desecration of Jewish cemeteries, in firebombings of immigrants' homes, and in racist murders.

Le Pen's trip comes in the context of escalating racist violence throughout Europe, the US and Canada. In Germany, a fascist party called the Republicans have picked up 10% of the vote in local and regional elections. German Nazis have also been responsible for hundreds of racist beatings and firebombings, a number of which have resulted in the deaths of Turkish immigrants.

But fascist violence is not unique to Europe. In Toronto, the month of June saw three racially-motivated attacks on Tamils from Sri Lanka. One of those attacks led to the death in hospital of Gunalan Muthulingam. In Montreal, fascists are believed responsible for the beating deaths of 13 gay men. Nazi groups like the Heritage Front are busy spreading their hatred in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal where they are trying to organize in high schools and have sponsored concerts by racist rock bands. Here in Halifax, fascist literature has been distributed in high schools and at events such as downtown Hallowe'en Night last year.

Le Pen's visit is designed as a pep rally for groups and would-be groups like these. Indeed, Le Pen or Gallou is scheduled to meet with the Quebec branch of the NF. By parading before them the leader of a Nazi party which is the process of building mass support, it is hoped that the morale of fascists here will be given a boost.

It is vital that we not make the mistake of failing to organize against the fascists because their forces are small today. Every anti-fascist must help to make sure that their numbers

and influence don't grow. This summer, Le Pen has been using funds from the European Parliament to attempt to hold conferences of the European Right internationally. But at each attempt—from Corfu to Edinburgh to Dublin to London—he has been prevented by mass mobilizations of anti-fascists who refuse to let him leave the airport, and in three cases to not even get off the plane!

This is how we have to respond when Le Pen tries to arrive in Montreal. Our slogan should be "Never Again!" Le Pen is trying to attract international support for his filthy Nazi movement and this visit would represent his first step into North America. If Le Pen succeeds in gaining a platform in Montreal, every racist and fascist from Wolfgang Droege of the Heritage Front to David Duke and the Ku Klux Klan in the US and Canada will gain a sense of legitimacy and confidence. Governments and opposition parties will side-shuffle a little further to the right. Every racist and fascist in Canada will be watching for Le Pen. And every anti-racist and anti-fascist has to be actively prepared to ensure that he will not pass.

The campaign against Le Pen is gathering momentum. You can help. The IS is producing posters, petitions and buttons to build the anti-Le Pen campaign. If you are willing to circulate petitions, put up posters or sell buttons (which say "Immigrants In, Nazis Out"), contact us. We are also organizing cars and buses from Ottawa, Kingston, Peterborough, Toronto, Hamilton and Windsor. Capitalism being what it is, all of this costs money. The IS is launching a \$5000 fund drive to cover the costs of this campaign. We need the active support of everyone who wants to see these violent, racist, sexist homophobes stopped. Whether it's going to Montreal (impractical for most on the coastal fringe), putting up posters, circulating petitions, wearing a button, or making a financial donation, your contribution will help ensure the fascists are stopped.

Paula Cornwall, International Socialists

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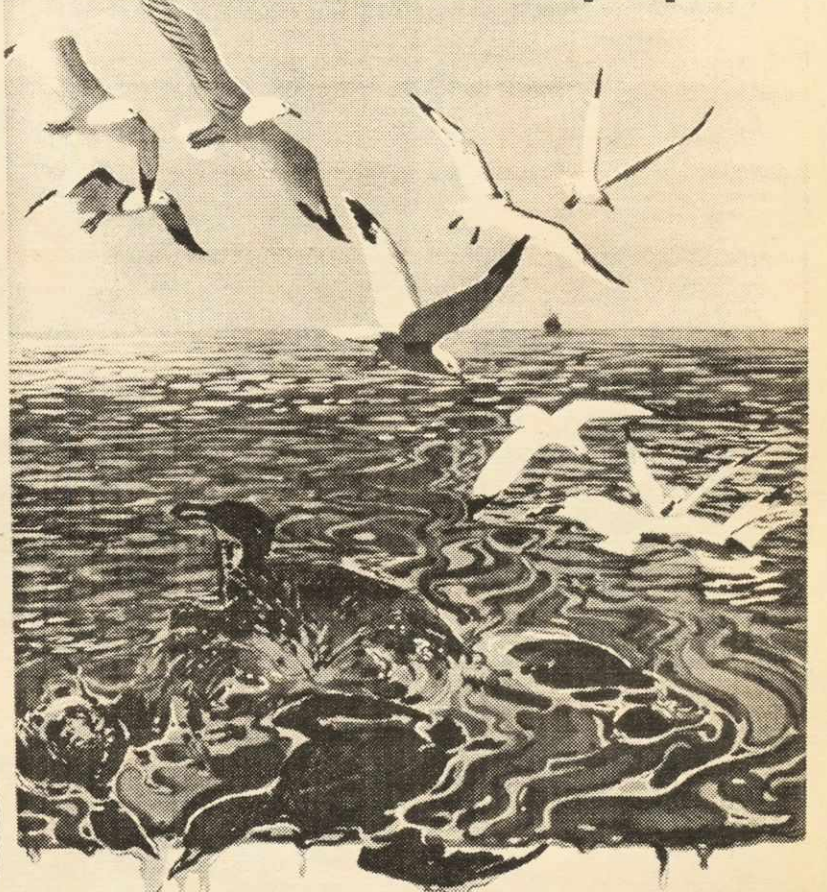
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