

Poland's Anti-Communist Law Turns History on its Head

“Democracy” in the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe will take another body blow on June 8, when a new law takes effect in Poland, banning the depiction of anything considered a “communist symbol.” In an outrageous twist, the law equates such symbols with the swastika and other Nazi insignia. The Communist Party of Canada condemns this legislation, which proves once again that democratic rights and civil liberties are being increasingly trampled across the European Union.

The legislation in Poland is an amendment to the penal code, criminalizing the dissemination of “communist symbolism.” Signed into law last fall by the late president Lech Kaczynski, the measure was adopted by a nearly unanimous vote in the country’s Parliament. The law includes a penalty of up to two years in prison for anyone who “produces, perpetuates, or imports, stores, possesses, presents, carries or sends a printout, a recording or other object” carrying “fascist, communist or other totalitarian symbolism” for other than “artistic” or “research” purposes.



Soviet Army liberates Berlin and Europe from the scourge of Naziism – May 9, 1945. Now they are equated as 'twin evils'???

In response, the Communist Party of Poland (KPP) correctly stated: “We strongly oppose efforts to equate fascism – which, based on racism, led to the bloodiest war in history thanks to the implementation of a plan to exterminate millions of people – with communism, which is built on the principles of social justice, and which defeated the genocidal fascists thanks to the utter dedication to struggle and sacrifice of countless millions of men, women and children. Despite even the most brutal repression we will not stop in our struggle for the victory of socialism, nor turn from the road to a victorious communist destiny!”

The free speech ban in Poland is just the latest such action taken by governments in Eastern Europe. Hungary imposed a ban on communist symbols in 1993; one of the leaders of the Hungarian Workers Party was given a prison sentence in 2004 for the “crime” of wearing a red star.

That sentence was overturned four years later by the European Court of Human Rights.

(over)

Yet a similar law was adopted by Lithuania in 2009, and bans are also being considered in Estonia, Latvia and other countries.

In 2007, the Czech government outlawed the Communist Youth Union because it called for public ownership of the means of production. After a huge international outcry, that ban was finally overturned a few months ago by the Czech courts. But right-wing Czech parties are now demanding steps to outlaw the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, the third-largest parliamentary party in the country.

This anti-communist campaign is also taking place on a continental level. The European Parliament last year proclaimed August 23 as a “Europe-wide Remembrance Day for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes.” The anti-communist measures in Poland and elsewhere serve broader objectives against the workers’ movement. They aim to suppress the activity and contain the influence of the Communists, and to block discussion of the socialist perspective, especially in the conditions of the present capitalist crisis. As George Toussas of the Communist Party of Greece warned in a December 3, 2009 statement in the European Parliament, the Polish ban is “an act of provocation aimed at prosecuting anyone who offers resistance and fights for a better future.”

Nor is this campaign limited to Europe. Here in Canada, anti-communist reactionaries with close ties to the Harper Tories are preparing to build a so-called “monument to the victims of totalitarianism” in the National Capital Region of Ottawa. The real purpose of this “monument” is to serve as a rallying point for those who seek to restrict and ultimately ban the activity of the Communists in Canada.

In the face of this anti-communist escalation, communists in other countries are joining with the Polish Communists to express their opposition to the legislation. A number of Communist and Workers’ Parties in Europe are sending MPs, MEPs, or other delegations to Warsaw to express their solidarity. Many parties will take part in a common day of action on June 8, 2010 with statements, news conferences, demonstrations, protests, and representations to Polish Embassies and EU offices, calling for the abolition of the anti-communist clauses and laws, and demanding the free, unhindered action of communists in all countries.

The Communist Party of Canada will join in these actions, by organizing pickets at Polish Consulates in Toronto and Vancouver.

Contact the Communist Party of Canada

290A Danforth Ave., Toronto, ON M4K 1N6

416-469-2446(v) • info@cpc-pcc.ca • www.comunist-party.ca

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