

Nekrasov: Putinism has Opened Way to Fascism in Russia

Opinion

Posted by:

Posted on : 2013/9/15 18:31:31

“Putin came to power in a lumpenized country, where the majority of the active population had been disoriented by the Soviet past and the chaotic-market present,” Nekrasov says. “Putinism’s harshness is a necessary condition for the rise of full-blooded fascism, a necessary but not a sufficient one.”

By Paul Goble* Staunton, VA, September 13 — Many commentators use the term “fascism” indiscriminately to refer to anyone of a nationalist orientation whom they don’t happen to like, according to Andrey Nekrasov, a Moscow film director. But if one uses the term correctly, it applies to the direction the Russian Federation has been proceeding under President Vladimir Putin. In a post on the Ekho Moskvy portal today, Nekrasov says that some recent discussions about Aleksey Navalny’s nationalism and his relationship to fascism come right “out of a Soviet kindergarten” and reflect widespread ignorance about the rise and nature of fascism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s (echo.msk.ru/blog/andnekrasov/1156810-echo/).

Nekrasov argues that “the political and social situation in Russia recalls much more the start of the 1930s in Germany than of the 1980s in Poland.” Hitler and Mussolini were each unique figures, but their personal qualities and appeals were only “catalysts” for a much broader social process. In the wake of World War I, “the spirit of the times was revolutionary.” In Russia, the revolution was a leftist one, while in Italy it was a rightist one because Russia’s bourgeoisie was weak while Italy’s was strong. Indeed, the strength of that class is why leftist revolutions failed in Germany and Finland. Now, however, “the very middle class which [Russians] have waited so long has appeared,” Nekrasov continues, and consequently “fascism is coming to Russia.” Many talk about “the harshness” of the Putin era as if it were already here, but this is “in another conversational sense [of the term], albeit not a kindergarten one,” the writer says.

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“Putinism’s harshness is a necessary condition for the rise of full-blooded fascism, a necessary but not a sufficient one.” Also required is a fully-formed bourgeoisie, “free from soviet socialist prejudices which include nominal social justice and nominal

internationalism.” It is not surprising, Nekrasov says, that protests like those behind Navalny against the Kremlin have taken place under “materialist slogans” about theft and the like. If one recognizes this aspect of the situation, he continues, “The apparently mysterious alliance of a large part of the intelligentsia and nationalism in the form of Navalny becomes understandable.” The reason is to be found in the ideology which for so long led people to oppose the Soviet system. Some, like Garry Kasparov, very much hope that a turn to the right in Russia will end “somewhere at the corner of Democratic and Republican,” but Nekrasov says that in his view, the former world chess champion is quite mistaken: “for the simple reason that Russia is not America.” Others like Viktor Shenderovich are not entirely pleased with the latest trend but suppose that “Russia is fated to move to the right whether we want it to or not and so it is better that this happen with such a sympathetic youth as

Navalny.” There is, Nekrasov says, “a definite logic in this.” But it is wrong because it is determinist and leads people to go along rather than fight it. “Fascism,” Nekrasov points out, “has one curious characteristic feature. Like death with Brodsky, it always appears to be about others and to be something historical. But its arrival in reality according to many witnesses looks even interesting. Effective. And for each corresponding era – contemporary.” That doesn’t mean that it is either contemporary or inevitable and that it cannot be opposed and even defeated, the blogger says. That is the challenge now, he adds, even for those who cannot define fascism and who do not recognize the appearance of its preconditions even when they are right in front of them.

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