

# The Return of Fascism

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There was nothing unexpected about the racially motivated rioting and attacks that took place in Moscow and other cities during the past 10 days. But many people are still shocked by the image of Russian youth giving Nazi salutes against the backdrop of the Kremlin wall and by reports of an angry, blood-thirsty mob sweeping through metro cars and beating dark-skinned passengers.

The rioters had no political agenda or ideology other than their hatred for non-Russians. Even the most demagogic of the mobs did not chant a single slogan calling for social or political change.

The fact that both sides turned out in large numbers in several cities within a very short span of time creates the strong impression that their actions were coordinated in advance.

Regardless of whether there was a screenwriter behind the rioting, the scenario that is playing out suggests only one possible ending: the collapse and destruction of Russia.

The logic of Russian fascists has always stood in sharp contrast to the logic and traditions of the development of the nation. The problem is not that most ultranationalists are poorly acquainted with the history and culture of the people in whose name they claim to speak, which is true of fascist movements in all countries. The problem is that, historically, Russia developed as an imperial nation for which ethnic and cultural diversity is the natural and only form of existence. If fascist propaganda in ethnically homogenous societies could claim to be an ideology unifying the majority of the population, then Russian fascism never even attempted to present itself in that light.

From the moment it first appeared in the 1920s, Russian fascism has been an ideology of national division focused on opposition to and destruction of the existing Russian state.

It was natural for Russian fascists to fight with Nazi Germany against their own country. Hitler's plan to eliminate the Russian state did not contradict the ideas of Russian fascists. That plan called for the existing Russian nation with its history and traditions to give way to a new ethnic community of pureblood Slavs and Aryans. This group had nothing in common with the larger Russian population — ethnically, culturally or even religiously, because Christianity supports a unity based on common faith, not shared bloodlines or tribal affiliations.

But where did all these fascists come from? How is it possible that they prefer Hitler to taking pride in their own country and its history?

Surprisingly, a significant number of those who turned out to beat Russia's "blacks" are from well-to-do families, and they are graduates of respectable schools and universities. The cause of the unrest does not lie in the poverty or lack of privileges suffered by certain individuals or social groups, but in the larger social crisis gripping Russia. The mobs of modern-day Black Hundreds and the gangs of North Caucasus natives are the product of the general breakdown of the processes of social integration and education.

Many years ago, Erich Fromm in his book "Escape from Freedom" described how the unraveling of social ties in a society that lives according to the principle of every man for himself would create a psychological and cultural breeding ground for fascism. If the economic processes moving in that direction are not stopped, we will be headed not for a totalitarian nightmare.

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