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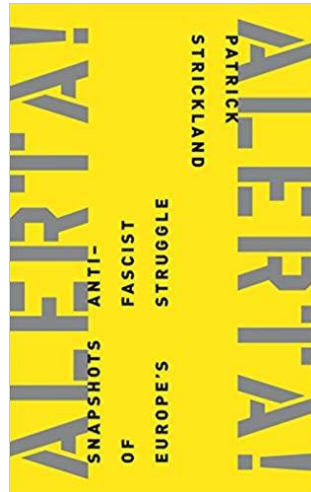
by RON JACOBS

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Chasing Down Fascists in Europe

Polish government officials openly marching in a fascist parade along with tens of thousands of their country men and women. Police and city officials in the supposedly liberal city of Portland OR provoking antifascist protesters while protecting fascists and their sympathizers. An openly racist president of the United States declares that he is a nationalist. This writer figures he knows his followers will implicitly understand that the word “white” precedes the word “nationalist.” The modern fascist group Proud Boys marches in Philadelphia; when confronted by a much larger crowd of antifascists, the Proud Boys call cabs on their cell phones. The taxi drivers overwhelmingly refuse to give them rides. In Boston, the local Proud Boys are chased away from a book fair they hoped to disrupt.

We live in a time when humanity’s most hateful members have once again garnered public attention. Fascist and white supremacist groups across the world are marching proudly. Some of their allies are gaining ground in legislative bodies. In Hungary, a fascist runs the government. His supporters engage in crimes of hate against their fellow humans, now legitimized by the creatures who rule them. Refugees from capital’s wars struggle to make their way towards a new life, their journey impeded by police and civilians motivated by a fear and hatred legitimized by the fascist elements now making headway in Europe—a continent that seems to have forgotten the essential inhumanity of Nazism. Although intolerance is gaining ground, so is resistance.



From individual acts against fascists and Nazis that remind this reviewer of the protagonists in Hans Fallada's masterful novel *No Man Dies Alone* to mass actions defending refugees and fighting fascists bold enough to march, European resistance to fascism ebbs and flows according to events in the streets and legislatures. This resistance is the subject of journalist Patrick Strickland's new book *Alerta! Snapshots of Europe's Anti-Fascist Struggle*. This slender text begins by summarizing the rise in fascist movements and political parties in five European countries: Germany, Greece, Slovakia, Italy, and Croatia. After this introduction, Strickland describes the resistance to these phenomena. His reporting moves deftly between stories of individual actions and mass actions in defense of refugees and against fascism, while touching the essential elements of the politics that motivate the resisters.

Of the individual resisters portrayed in Strickland's text, the one I found most appealing is a woman who is introduced at the beginning of *Alerta!*'s chapter on Germany. It is her story that reminded me of the couple in the aforementioned Fallada novel; a couple who leave anti-Nazi notes in numerous places across Hitler's Berlin, never knowing (and even doubting) the impact of the notes and their individual resistance. Strickland's subject—a 70-year-old woman in Berlin named Irmela Mensah-Schramm—spends her days removing Nazi and anti-migrant posters and graffiti from the walls of Berlin's buildings. Never knowing for certain the impact of her self-appointed task, Mensah-Schramm rides streetcars and buses around the city looking for graffiti and posters to remove. Her resistance also means that she attends protests against fascists and their sympathizers.

Alerta! has more such tales of individual acts. It also describes certain protests in defense of refugees and other foreigners across Europe, as well as protests countering fascist gatherings. The author describes actions against Greece's Golden Dawn and the work of

anti-fascists in Greece's refugee centers. The section on Italy describes a gym run by antifascist sportsmen and beatings of antifascists by right-wing thugs. In his telling, Strickland refers to the original generation of anti-fascists who opposed Hitler, Mussolini and other fascist manifestations of the mid-twentieth century. He discusses the recent growth of revisionist history about that period which whitewashes the role of fascist movements and leaders.

Strickland's reports utilize a journalistic approach he honed while working for Al Jazeera and other outlets. He does not spare the reader from the dark specter of fascism that is spreading across Europe, nor does he sugarcoat the growing numbers of Europeans who are falling for fascism's rhetoric of hate as they attempt to make sense of the changing nature of the world they live in. As much a warning as it is a report, Patrick Strickland's *Alerta!* is recommended reading for all those who understand that fascists, white supremacists and Nazis need to be actively opposed, not ignored. In fact, it might be even more important that it is read by those who think Nazis should be ignored.