

Who is to blame for the neo-Nazi rampage in Chemnitz, Germany?

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On Sunday and Monday, over 7,000 neo-Nazis marched through the streets of the East German city of Chemnitz, formerly known as Karl-Marx-Stadt, attacking foreigners, chanting nationalist slogans and giving Nazi salutes.

“I saw huge groups of people with a racist mind-set,” one witness told Deutsche Welle. “It was a right-wing mob. They were roaming around freely in the city centre. They were chasing migrants... They took over the city.” While all this was happening, the police did nothing to control, much less stop, the fascist riot.

These events have come as a profound shock within Germany, where the population retains a deeply-rooted and bitter hatred of Nazism.

With further demonstrations planned by the extreme right over the weekend, leading figures within the government, led by Chancellor Angela Merkel, are engaged in a thoroughly hypocritical and dishonest attempt to absolve themselves of any responsibility for what took place.

“We have video footage of the fact that there was race baiting, there were riots, there was hatred on the streets, and that has nothing to do with our rule of law,” Merkel said.

Social Democratic President Frank-Walter Steinmeier added, “I strongly condemn the extreme right-wing attacks.”

Saxony State Premier Michael Kretschmer, a member of the Christian Democratic Union, said at a press conference on behalf of the state government, “The political instrumentalization by right-wing extremists is disgusting and is rejected by us... We are conducting a determined fight against racism and xenophobia in the Free State of Saxony.”

These individuals are under the impression no one notices that they have systematically built up the very fascist forces whose actions they now condemn.

The Grand Coalition government of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Christian Democratic Union

(CDU) has effectively adopted the xenophobic anti-refugee policies of the fascistic Alternative for Germany (AfD). A system of camps to hold refugees is being created nationwide, mass deportations are taking place and the media and all the establishment parties are demagogically inciting hatred against refugees.

Merkel, who has long been dubbed the “refugee chancellor” by the media, now emphasizes in every government statement that “a situation like 2015 [in which Germany accepted hundreds of thousands of refugees] cannot be repeated” and calls for “a functioning culture of repatriation in Germany,” i.e., the mass deportation of refugees.

The formation of the Grand Coalition government involved the conscious decision to make the AfD, with just 12.6 percent of the vote, the official opposition party within the German parliament.

The events at Chemnitz and the trajectory of official politics in Germany comprehensively expose all the apologetic claims by historians and politicians that Hitler’s regime was an aberration, that it was not an outgrowth of the crisis of capitalist society, and that it was the response to anti-democratic “left wing extremism” that destabilized the Weimar Republic.

Though there is no politically organized mass socialist movement in Germany, Nazism is again establishing a political presence. And it is indisputable that its growth has been encouraged and supported by the policies of the major bourgeois parties, backed by the media.

The rise of the extreme right and the adoption of the AfD’s policies by the Grand Coalition and de facto, all establishment parties, were systematically prepared ideologically and politically.

For the last five years, going back to 2013, there has been a relentless campaign to revise history, to ideologically legitimize the extreme right and to viciously attack those, particularly the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP), who have sought to expose this

right-wing campaign.

The media has been engaged in an effort to legitimize the historical relativization of the Third Reich, presenting the Nazi regime as a legitimate response to the threat posed by the Soviet Union and Bolshevism.

The principal ideological leader and beneficiary of this campaign has been the right-wing historian Jörg Baberowski, who teaches at Berlin's Humboldt University. He has been lauded by the media as Germany's greatest scholar and transformed into a talk-show and media celebrity. Baberowski's provocative declaration to *Der Spiegel* in 2014 that "Hitler wasn't vicious" has been either ignored or rationalized.

At the same time, the SGP has been the subject of an unrelenting campaign of slander in the media, precisely on account of its exposure of Baberowski and the systematic attempt to rewrite German history and trivialize the crimes of German imperialism.

This right-wing campaign has been endorsed by the administration of Humboldt University, which has protected Baberowski and covered up his links to the extreme right, even though Baberowski himself has been a leading voice of anti-refugee demagoguery.

In May 2016, at the Phil.Cologne, an international festival for philosophy, Baberowski asserted that "men in Germany" were helpless in the face of violence from migrants because they were no longer able to fight. This had supposedly been visible on New Year's Eve, 2016, in Cologne, when, he said, German men had not defended their women from alleged assaults.

"We see that men in Germany no longer have any idea how to deal with violence," Baberowski argued. His statements were prominently quoted and promoted by Breitbart News in the US and other far right news outlets.

Baberowski's academic reflections on "violence" have been put into practice by the Nazis rampaging through Chemnitz.

The placing of the SGP on the official list of subversive organizations by Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), as the secret service is called, is the direct outcome of the efforts to suppress its exposure of the far-right. The current BfV report, published in July with a foreword by Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (CSU), includes the SGP as an "object of observation" because it fights against "nationalism, imperialism and militarism" and protests against right-wing extremism.

In other words, from the point of view of the coalition government and the BfV, which maintains close contacts

with the AfD itself, it is not the neo-Nazis but their opponents, i.e., the vast majority of the population, that are the real problem.

It is no coincidence that the right-wing extremist mob was able to march through Chemnitz almost undisturbed by the police on Sunday and Monday. In Saxony, the close links between right-wing extremists, the police and government are legion. Confident that they enjoy high level support in the state, the Nazis are intensifying their political provocations.

The dangerous developments in Germany show that, for all the crimes of the Nazis between 1933–45, the German ruling elite is as reactionary, and German democracy as fragile, as ever. Its natural inclination historically is to the extreme right, all the more so when it senses popular discontent and when it sees the need to revive its imperialist strategic ambitions.

But the fact that fascism is once again on the march not just in Germany, but throughout Europe and the world, makes clear that this global process, far from being an accident, expresses the fundamental tendency of the capitalist system.

There is no way to defeat the revival of Nazism and imperialist militarism except through the building of a genuine revolutionary socialist movement. The time has come to revive the great traditions of Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Lenin and Trotsky that have been defended solely by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and its sections. The SGP calls upon all workers and youth to join its ranks and take up the fight against capitalism, fascism and war.

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