

The fight against fascism in Germany requires a socialist perspective

4 September 2018

Millions of people in Germany and around the world have reacted with disgust and horror to the scenes of fascist violence in the German city of Chemnitz. On August 27, thousands of neo-Nazis marched through the city, giving the Hitler salute undisturbed by the police, and attacking people they identified as foreigners.

In recent days, tens of thousands of people have taken part in demonstrations throughout Germany against this outpouring of right-wing violence. But moral outrage is not enough to stop the fascist mob: it is necessary to understand the political roots of its resurgence.

Unlike the 1930s, the Nazis today are not a mass movement, but a hated minority. But this does not make them any less dangerous. They derive their strength from the politics of the establishment parties and from the support they receive from the state apparatus. They feel strong because they have friends in the police, in the secret service and in the government. The Nazi march in Chemnitz was preceded by a years-long campaign to promote right-wing extremist politics.

Eight years ago, the book “Germany abolishes itself” by Social Democratic Party (SPD) leader Thilo Sarrazin opened the door for the official rehabilitation of xenophobia and racism. The book, which claimed that German society was being destroyed by foreigners, was praised in feature articles and on talk shows as a bestseller before the first copy even reached bookstores.

In 2013, German President Joachim Gauck announced the end of German military restraint, and the newly-formed grand coalition government agreed on a program of massive military rearmament. The government supported the right-wing coup in Ukraine, setting in motion a continuing confrontation with Russia.

The German political establishment began a systematic campaign to downplay German crimes in the First and Second World War. “It can hardly be a responsible policy in Europe, if you begin with the idea: We have been to blame for everything,” the Berlin academic Herfried

Münkler said.

In *Der Spiegel* magazine, his colleague Jörg Baberowski defended the Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte and explained that Hitler was “not vicious” because he did not want “talk at his table about the extermination of the Jews.”

In a panel discussion at the German Historical Museum in 2014, Baberowski said the fight against the Islamic State in Syria and other terrorists could only be won if Western armies were prepared to “take hostages, burn down villages, hang people and spread fear and terror.”

At a philosophy festival in May 2016, Baberowski claimed that “men in Germany” were helpless against immigrant violence because they could no longer fight. “We see that men in Germany no longer know how to handle violence,” said Baberowski. These statements, which were prominently quoted by numerous right-wing websites, were put into practice by the fascist mob in Chemnitz.

When the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP—Socialist Equality Party) and its student organization, the IYSSE, protested against Baberowski’s right-wing extremist positions and his attempt to whitewash Nazi crimes, we became the target of a furious witch-hunt by the German political establishment. The media and the management of Humboldt University defended Baberowski, while he agitated against refugees on all TV channels and founded a far-right discussion group in which leading representatives of the fascistic Alternative for Germany (AfD) participate.

The AfD flourished in this right-wing climate. Among the fascist party’s leaders are many representatives of the state—military, intelligence officers, policemen, judges and professors. Although only 13 percent of voters supported the AfD in this year’s general election, it is now setting the political tone in Berlin. The federal government has adopted the AfD’s xenophobic refugee policy all down the line. The AfD heads important

parliamentary committees, leads the official opposition and enjoys a disproportionate presence in the media.

A key role in this right-wing conspiracy is played by the secret service. With its 3,100 employees and an annual budget of 350 million euros, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as the German secret service is called, is a hotbed of right-wing extremism. The National Socialist Underground (NSU) racist terrorist group was permeated with and partially financed by undercover informants working for the secret service.

The German secret service's "Constitutional protection report 2017," which appeared in July, employs rhetoric indistinguishable from that of the AfD. The network of neo-Nazis around the AfD and Pegida, the representatives of the New Right such as Björn Höcke, Götz Kubitschek and Jürgen Elsässer, as well as right-wing extremist publications such as *Junge Freiheit* and *Compact*, are not mentioned in the report. The name of the AfD appears only as a victim of alleged "left-wing extremists"!

While the AfD is given a free pass, the report effectively brands opposition to "supposed (sic!) nationalism, imperialism and militarism" as subversive. The SGP is listed in the report as a "left-wing extremist party" and an "object of observation." This is the answer of the German secret service to the SGP's efforts to expose the extreme right. In the eyes of the German state, it is not the AfD and the neo-Nazis that are the problem, but their opponents.

The state and government support the AfD and the neo-Nazis because they serve to create a constituency for its policies of military rearmament, attacks on democratic rights and social austerity. The dangerous developments of recent weeks have shown that German democracy is as fragile as it was in the 1930s. As soon as the German ruling class embarks on an imperialist great power policy and feels resistance from below, it again moves to the extreme right.

The grand coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats has agreed on a massive military rearmament program. Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (SPD) has threatened the US, the world's largest military power, with a "counterweight" if the White House crosses "red lines." The strategy papers from the Ministry of Defence under Ursula von der Leyen read like the Nazi fantasies of German hegemony over Europe.

There is no support for this policy in the population. This is why official politics takes the form of a conspiracy at the highest level of the state, in which the opposition parties—the Greens, the Left Party and the Free

Democratic Party (FDP)—are also involved. They have all helped to organize the social austerity that widened the gulf between rich and poor. They demand more police and stronger intelligence services and support the militaristic politics of the grand coalition government.

This development is not limited to Germany. Across Europe, in the face of growing social tensions, the ruling elites are relying on authoritarian forms of rule and fascist forces. The global nature of this process makes clear that this is not a coincidence, but the fundamental tendency of the capitalist system.

The only social force that can counter this development and stop the extreme right is the international working class. For this reason, the SGP calls for the expansion of the class struggle across the continent. The conspiracy of the grand coalition, the intelligence services and right-wing extremists must be stopped.

It is time to revive the revolutionary socialist traditions of Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Lenin and Trotsky, defended only by the International Committee of the Fourth International and its sections. The SGP calls on workers and young people to join its ranks and take up the fight against capitalism, fascism and war.

The SGP demands:

- * Stop the conspiracy of the grand coalition, state apparatus and right-wing extremists!

- * No more war! Stop Germany's return to militarist great power politics!

- * Abolish the secret service and immediately cease monitoring the SGP and other left-wing organizations!

- * Defend the right to asylum! No to increased state powers and surveillance!

- * End poverty and exploitation—for social equality! The wealth of the financial oligarchy, the banks and major corporations must be expropriated and placed under democratic control!

the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>