

Anti-Semitic and far-right violence on the rise in Germany

By Johannes Stern
21 February 2019

Statistics shedding light on dangerous political developments in Germany were released over the past week. Antisemitic crimes and acts of violence have risen sharply over the past year. According to the latest figures from the federal government, police forces across the country registered 1,646 antisemitic criminal acts during 2018. This is 10 percent more than in 2017. For that year, the federal government registered 1,504 antisemitic attacks.

The number of antisemitic acts of violence grew even more quickly last year, by 40 percent. While the police confirmed 62 violent crimes in 2018, it was 37 a year earlier.

The figures were provided in answers by the grand coalition to parliamentary questions tabled by the Left Party on antisemitic criminality. The answer also revealed that the largest number of antisemitic violent crimes were perpetrated by individuals associated with the far-right spectrum. Out of 755 criminal acts categorised as antisemitic, 670 were labelled politically motivated crimes (PMKs). Twenty-five are listed as “PMK-foreign ideology,” 17 as “PMK-religious ideology,” and eight as “PMK-left-wing.”

These extremely concerning figures were barely noted by the political establishment and mainstream media. Most newspapers published brief news items, and neither the German chancellor nor leading politicians from the government or opposition parties made statements. At the government press conference on February 13, Interior Ministry spokesperson Sören Schmidt dismissed the question of how these attacks were to be explained and what was being done to prevent them by saying that the government’s antisemitism ombudsman was looking into the matter. He had “no further comment to make at this time.”

The published figures are obviously a major irritant for the establishment parties. The figures expose the lying

official claim, supported by the far-right AfD, that antisemitism in Germany has been “imported,” and is linked above all to Muslim immigrants. As the statistics reveal, the vast majority of antisemitic incidents are not linked to religious or “foreign ideology,” let alone left-wing groups, but are the responsibility of the far right.

The rise of antisemitic crimes is part of a growing wave of far-right violence. According to the latest figures on right-wing criminality published by the Interior Ministry, there were 19,105 crimes committed between January and November 2018 that were classified as “PMK-right-wing,” including 1,072 acts of violence. In addition, “one successful and six attempted murders motivated by right-wing politics took place.” The real number is likely much higher.

Most of the right-wing criminality and acts of violence last year occurred in September. During this month, neo-Nazis repeatedly marched through Chemnitz to witch-hunt foreigners and left-wing opponents. During the right-wing extremist marches, antisemitic attacks also occurred. In one of these incidents, a neo-Nazi mob attacked the Jewish restaurant Schalom. At the time, there was no outcry in the media or political establishment. On the contrary, leading government officials, including Interior Minister Horst Seehofer and former head of the domestic intelligence agency Hans-Georg Maassen, declared their solidarity with the right-wing extremist protests, and denied that any violent attacks took place.

The figures that have now been published are an indictment of the German government and the entire ruling class, which have created the conditions in which violent right-wing extremist thugs and antisemites are able to act ever more aggressively. The established parties are promoting and defending the right-wing extremist AfD, cooperating with it in parliamentary committees, and embracing its programme so as to enforce militarist

policies, the strengthening of the domestic repressive apparatus and social spending cuts.

The grand coalition's refugee policy is just as heavily influenced by the AfD as its strengthening of the police, intelligence agencies, and military. The grand coalition's Verfassungsschutz Report, issued by the domestic intelligence agency, also bears the AfD's imprint. While the AfD and its right-wing extremist supporters are merely mentioned as the "victims" of alleged "left-wing extremism," all opposition to capitalism, nationalism, militarism, and imperialism is denounced as "left-wing extremist" and "unconstitutional." The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) is taking legal action against surveillance by German secret service.

In his book, *Why Are They Back? Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy, and the Return of Fascism in Germany*, SGP Deputy National Secretary Christoph Vandreier examines in detail how the AfD's rise was systematically prepared ideologically and politically by the intelligence agencies, political parties, the media and university professors. This created the intellectual environment within which fascism could thrive once again almost 75 years after the collapse of the Third Reich.

In the first chapter, "The return of German militarism," Vandreier deals with what is in a certain sense a programmatic article, "The transformation of the past," which appeared in *Der Spiegel* in early 2014. Authored by Dirk Kurbjuweit, who was subsequently promoted to the position of deputy editor-in-chief of Germany's largest news magazine, the article appealed for a "revision" of the crimes of German imperialism in the twentieth century. As key witnesses in support of this "transformation," Kurbjuweit cited the right-wing Humboldt University historian Jörg Baberowski, and the best-known Nazi apologist of the post-war period, Ernst Nolte.

He cited Nolte as saying, among other things, "I am more and more convinced that we should attach more weight to the role played by the Poles and the British [in the question of responsibility for triggering World War II] than is usually the case." Nolte also accused the Jews of "Their own part in the gulag", because some Bolsheviks were Jews." Although Kurbjuweit remarked that this has long been an argument of "jew haters," he went on to comment, "But this man [Nolte] wasn't wrong about everything." He then cited Baberowski, a firm supporter of Nolte, who stated, "Hitler was not a psychopath, he was not vicious. He did not want to talk about the

extermination of the Jews at his table."

"Baberowski's breathtaking falsification of history and downplaying of Nazi crimes met with no opposition whatsoever from academia and the media," wrote Vandreier in *Why are They Back?* He then dealt with the reasons for this. The sharp shift to the right in intellectual life in Germany "cannot be explained by referring to the spinelessness of a few professors." Behind this quiescence lies "a fundamental development: the return of German militarism. The falsification of history prepares the ground for new wars."

It is now commonplace for right-wing extremists and neo-Nazis to ridicule the Nazis' victims without any protests coming from the political establishment or media. At the end of January, AfD parliamentary deputy Marc Jongen delivered a fascist speech following the annual parliamentary commemoration of the Holocaust in which he relativised the Nazis' crimes. Prior to this, AfD deputies in the Bavarian state parliament boycotted a Holocaust commemoration event. And on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Polish right-wing extremists demonstrated on the grounds of the former concentration camp and shouted anti-Semitic slogans.

In contrast to the 1930s, fascism is not yet a mass movement. But it is equally as dangerous due to the support it enjoys from high places. The most important lesson of German history is that the struggle against fascism, antisemitism and militarism is inseparable from the fight against their source, the capitalist system, and against all defenders of this bankrupt system. This is the perspective of the SGP. The SGP is running candidates in the European elections to arm the opposition of workers and young people to the far-right danger with a socialist programme.

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