

Right-wing terror in Germany: the responsibility of the Grand Coalition

By Johannes Stern
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After the terrorist attack on the synagogue in Halle, which almost led to the worst massacre of Jews in Europe since the end of National Socialism, leading government politicians have washed their hands of responsibility and pointed to the guilt of the far-right AfD.

Last Wednesday, Vice-Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) ascribed joint responsibility for the act, along with the perpetrator himself, to the AfD. When asked whether the intellectual arsonists could also be found in the AfD, the Social Democrat told the newspapers of the Funke Mediagroup: “The AfD cannot deny its responsibility in this matter.” The “racist-motivated act” had “originated in a milieu that calls slogans from the right not only on the Internet, but also in state parliaments and in the Bundestag. The AfD should not act as if it had nothing to do with any of this.”

CDU chairwoman and acting defence minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer made similar remarks this weekend. The AfD is “the political arm of right-wing radicalism,” she explained at the Germany Day of the Young Union (Junge Union—the joint youth organisation of the CDU and CSU) in Saarbrücken. “Right-wing radicalism” was “a real problem in Germany.” “We must not get used to the fact that day after day one taboo after another is really broken in the political debate.”

Workers and young people who want to fight against the return of fascism in Germany and internationally must reject the hypocrisy of the Federal Government with contempt. In fact, the responsibility for right-wing terror lies not only with the AfD, but also with the Grand Coalition and its political supporters in the Left Party and the Greens. If the AfD is “the political arm of right-wing radicalism,” then the security apparatus enforced by right-wing networks—in particular the Office for the Protection of the Constitution—is its state arm and the Federal Government its pioneer.

The Grand Coalition’s political record leaves no room for doubt.

After the 2017 Bundestag elections, the SPD and CDU/CSU continued the grand coalition, making the AfD the official opposition leader in the Bundestag and systematically integrating it into parliamentary work. For example, Stephan Brandner (AfD), who fires off anti-Semitic tweets after the attack in Halle, owes his office as chairman of the legal committee to the then-SPD parliamentary party leader Thomas Oppermann, who proposed the AfD politician for election. Other right-wing AfD extremists, such as the neoliberal racist Peter Boehringer (Budget) and the previously convicted hooligan Sebastian Münzenmeier (Tourism), were also made committee chairmen in the Bundestag with the votes of the established parties.

Over the past two years, the Grand Coalition has systematically adopted the AfD’s agitation and policies, creating the ideological climate and political conditions for right-wing terror. It must be clearly stated that the attack in Halle is a direct result of this policy.

The manifesto of the assassin, Stephan Balliet, shows that he acted out of hatred for refugees, Muslims, Jews and socialists. Among other things, he writes in this document, “I originally intended to storm a mosque or an

anti-fascist cultural centre... But even the killing of 100 golems would make no difference if more than these were smuggled into Europe on a single day.” Shortly before his crime, he incited a video riot against foreigners, denied the Holocaust and called Jews “the cause of all problems.”

The “themes” that made Balliet take action and the language he used are not only the themes and language of the AfD, but also those of the Grand Coalition. That the “spiritual arsonists” are also in government is obvious. Thus, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (CSU) announced after the right-wing radical protests in Chemnitz last summer, in which, among other things, a Jewish restaurant was attacked, that he himself would have marched along if he were not a minister. He then called the “migration question” the “mother of all political problems in this country” and stressed that “Islam does not belong to Germany.”

The trivialisation of National Socialism and the fight against the left are also part of the policy of the Grand Coalition. In the speech given by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD) on 1 September in Warsaw on the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, he made no mention of the extermination of six million Jews. This was a clear concession and signal to the AfD, whose chairman Alexander Gauland (a former CDU member) glorified the Wehrmacht and described National Socialism as “bird shit in over 1000 years of successful German history.” The Grand Coalition had already previously made a statement backing the right-wing radical Humboldt University professor Jörg Baberowski, who played down the Holocaust and claimed that Hitler was “not vicious.”

In the current Verfassungsschutzbericht, the Grand Coalition cites the Socialist Equality Party (SGP) as an “object of observation” for the second time in a row, because it advocates a socialist programme that the Interior Ministry claims “is directed against the existing state and social order that has been flatly denigrated as ‘capitalism’” and “against supposed nationalism, imperialism and militarism.”

The AfD, its openly fascist wing “Der Flügel” and the neo-Nazi milieu surrounding it, on the other hand, are not mentioned with even one word by the German domestic intelligence service and are merely named as “victims” of alleged “left-wing extremists.”

Despite all the lip service, the Grand Coalition allows the right-wing radical terror networks, which reach deep into the army, police and secret services and keep death lists with several thousand persons as targets, to operate almost unchallenged, even after the NSU’s bombing and the murder of Kassel’s district president Walter Lübcke (CDU).

Well-known right-wing terrorists, such as Lieutenant Franco A., are at large, and his comrade-in-arms Maximilian T., an employee of the AfD parliamentarian Jan Nolte, even received a house ID card for the Bundestag. According to the official statistics of the Federal Criminal Police Office, a total of 497 right-wing extremists remain free even though arrest warrants have been issued against them.

To play down or even deny the Grand Coalition’s responsibility for the

rise of the extreme right would be to turn a blind eye to political reality and the lessons of history. Their policy is not an oversight but is based on conscious choices. It aims to strengthen right-wing extremist tendencies in the state apparatus and to re-establish a fascist party in Germany almost 75 years after the ban of the NSDAP. As in the 1930s, such a party is needed by the ruling class to enforce its policy of militarism, internal armament and social cuts in the face of the enormous resistance of the population.

As early as 2014, the Socialist Equality Party (SGP) had examined the objective driving forces behind the return of German militarism and warned of the consequences at a “special conference against war.” Only a few months after Steinmeier, then Foreign Minister, announced at the Munich Security Conference that Germany was “too big and economically too strong to comment on world politics only from the sidelines,” we wrote:

The revival of militarism is the response of the ruling class to the explosive social tensions, the deepening economic crisis and the growing conflicts between European powers. Its aim is the conquest of new spheres of influence, markets and raw materials upon which the export-dependent German economy relies; the prevention of a social explosion by deflecting social tensions onto an external enemy; and the militarization of society as a whole, including the development of an all-embracing national surveillance apparatus, the suppression of social and political opposition, and the bringing into line of the media.

The resolution also showed how deeply the so-called “left” opposition parties are integrated into the structures of German imperialism. The Left Party and the Greens helped plan the revival of German militarism, conspired with all other parties in the secret service and defence committees of the Bundestag, and accompanied the Minister of Defence on troop visits to the German war zones. They act as political supporters of the grand coalition, and some of their leading representatives, such as Left Party faction leader Sahra Wagenknecht and the Green mayor of Tübingen Boris Palmer, have in the meantime openly adopted the slogans of the AfD against refugees.

The turn of all sections of the ruling class towards militarism, war and fascism 30 years after reunification and the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy is an international phenomenon. Everywhere the bourgeoisie reacts to the deep crisis of capitalism and the growing class tensions and conflicts between the big powers by breaking with basic democratic norms and openly resorting to dictatorial means.

In Spain, the ruling class is rehabilitating Franco fascism and, with the support of the pseudo-left Podemos, taking action against separatist politicians and mass protests in Catalonia. In Britain, over 1,600 peaceful climate demonstrators were arrested by police last week after police banned demonstrations throughout London. In France, President Emmanuel Macron publicly praises Nazi collaborator Philippe Pétain and uses brutal police force to impose the biggest social attacks of the post-war period against massive social resistance. And in the USA, President Donald Trump is conducting a fascist campaign against the Democrats’ essentially right-wing election campaign.

The Socialist Equality Party in the USA, the American sister party of the SGP, stressed in an important statement published last week that the fight against fascism is a fight against capitalism and imperialism. It must be conducted entirely independently of and against all bourgeois parties and requires the independent mobilization of the working class on the basis of a socialist program. In the statement “No fascism in America! Build a mass movement to drive Trump out of office,” it says:

Democratic rights cannot be reconciled with a social system based on extreme inequality and constant wars. The 1930s have shown that the struggle against fascism and authoritarianism can only be based on an anti-capitalist and explicitly socialist program.

Such a struggle can only be waged with the methods of class struggle. Its goal must be the formation of a workers’ government that radically redistributes wealth, puts huge enterprises and banks under the democratic control of the working population, and introduces a planned economy that serves social needs and not private profit.

This is the perspective on which the SGP bases its struggle against the return of militarism and fascism. Especially in Germany, where National Socialism raged and the ruling class organized the most horrific crimes in history, the opposition to the right-wing danger is enormous. Since the right-wing extremist AfD entered the Bundestag two years ago, tens of thousands have repeatedly taken to the streets. The largest demonstration to date, with almost a quarter of a million participants, took place almost exactly one year ago in Berlin, after the right-wing extremist riots in Chemnitz. After the terrorist attack in Halle, tens of thousands took to the streets to demonstrate against right-wing extremist and anti-Semitic violence.

In order to prevent the ruling class from reintroducing fascist methods into its armament plans and great-power fantasies, the protests against the right must be expanded and oriented to the growing strike and protest movement of the international working class. The central question is the active struggle for a socialist program and the construction of the SGP and the International Committee of the Fourth International as the new revolutionary leadership of the international working class.

The SGP raises the following demands:

- Stop the conspiracy of the Grand Coalition, state apparatus and right-wing extremists!
- Smash the right-wing networks in the Bundeswehr, police and secret services!
- Dissolution of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, and immediate cessation of observation of the SGP and other left-wing organizations!
- Never again war! Stop the return of Germany to an aggressive great power policy!
- Defend the right to asylum! No to police-state build-up and surveillance!
- End poverty and exploitation—for social equality! The great assets of the banks and corporations must be expropriated and put under democratic control!
- No to nationalism and EU dictatorship—for the United Socialist States of Europe!

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