

Political stupidity or provocation?

## Brandenburg “anti-racist group” attacks World Socialist Web Site

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Sometimes it is hard to determine where political stupidity ends and political provocation begins. In any event, the boundary is fluid.

An article posted October 31 on the German anti-fascist web site *Inforiot* is a crude mixture of both. The article, headlined “*World Socialist Web Site* persecutes anti-racists!” is signed by “Brandenburg Antira.” It abuses the *World Socialist Web Site* in the most excessive terms for opposing the efforts of the intelligence service to present the WSWS as part of a milieu of violent “left extremism.”

The Brandenburg intelligence service accuses the WSWS of being the ideological instigators of an attack on the immigration office in Frankfurt (Oder) on September 16, 2003. It justifies this by claiming that a WSWS article dealing critically with the state’s immigration policy, and published in 2001, was found at the scene. Although this article is based on verifiable facts, and in no way calls for violence, the intelligence service states, “The road to criminal acts is paved with such texts.” The WSWS has opposed this slander and has also reserved the right to pursue the matter by legal means. [See “Brandenburg intelligence service slanders the *World Socialist Web Site*”].

The “Antira” article describes the attack on the immigration office to be the “action of unknown anti-racists” and declares that the WSWS should be “proud” of the fact that “its theoretical work is made responsible for the practical actions of others,” instead of dissociating itself from them.

The article goes on to accuse the WSWS of defaming “radical and militant left-wingers” and of furnishing “practical assistance to the police” by undertaking its own investigation of the events. It ends with a torrent of unflattering insults, which we will spare repeating here. The article’s author seeks to express that, in his opinion, the WSWS is neither socialist nor revolutionary nor anti-racist, but instead “a considerable danger for the left-wing scene.”

Despite all of his radical abuse about “the apparatus of racist repression,” the first thing noticeable is that the “Antira” author agrees with the secret service on one question: namely, that left-wing politics and the use of violence are one and the same.

For him, it is a matter of course that the nocturnal smashing of windowpanes constitutes a militant anti-racist action. He sees no need to explain how such an act contributes to fighting racism and xenophobia. It remains a mystery how the demolition of

government offices is supposed to assist refugees or foreigners, to restrain the government’s attacks on immigrants, or to mobilize the population against such attacks.

Such actions have nothing in common with left-wing or socialist politics. Socialist politics are democratic—in the original sense of the word of “rule by the people.” They endeavour to develop the political consciousness of the working class and strengthen its self-confidence. They strive to enable the great majority of the population to become politically active and to take their fate into their own hands. The action in Frankfurt (Oder) expresses only contempt for the opinions of the broad population, who can gain nothing from such acts of vandalism. At best, it was an act of vengeance by politically confused young people; at worst it was pure provocation.

The “Antira” author’s description of those responsible for the attack in Frankfurt (Oder) as “revolutionaries” is simply absurd. Revolutions are mass popular movements. They are characterised by the independent intervention of the masses into political events that are normally the preserve of a small elite. The identification of revolutionary politics with clandestine acts of sabotage, skirmishes with the state power and individual acts of violence belongs to the ideological arsenal of the police and secret services, who sense a violent conspiracy behind all opposition movements.

Only anarchist circles have on occasion described individual acts of violence as a means of revolutionary politics. Their aim has been to stir up the masses politically with spectacular “propaganda of action.” In practice this has always brought about the opposite result. Their acts of terrorism have a paralysing effect on the masses, while supplying the ruling class with the necessary pretext for intensifying repressive measures.

Marxists have always rejected such methods. As Leon Trotsky wrote in 1911: “Contrary to the anarchists and in direct struggle against them, social democracy rejects all methods and means which seek to artificially propel forward social development and which place chemical substances in the stead of the insufficient revolutionary strength of the proletariat.”

In the “Antira” article, contempt for the working class is paired with a disdain for democratic rights. The “Antira” author reacts with unconcealed hostility to the defence of democratic rights by the WSWS Editorial Board. While the WSWS takes seriously the right to freedom of speech and opposes the slanders levelled by the

intelligence service, the “Antira” author regards such a stance as a “failure to radically criticise the state and the law.”

A letter appearing on *Infort*, signed by one “lil x-quadrat,” and presenting similar views to those of the “Antira” article, even denies that there are democratic rights at all: “In the end, all revolutionary action is illegal under capitalism, even if individual legal statutes do not state this expressly.”

In both cases, radical clichés about “revolutionary action” and “militant agitation” conceal enormous pessimism. Both firmly believe that the state possesses unrestricted and absolute power and can trample on democratic rights at will.

However, democratic rights are not a gift from the state, which the authorities can retract as desired. They are, in the final analysis, the result of many decades of struggle by the workers movement. The introduction of universal suffrage and other democratic rights under Kaiser Wilhelm was a consequence of the political work carried out by social democracy. The democratic rights embodied in the Weimar constitution were a concession to the 1918 revolution in Germany. And the rights guaranteed in the German constitution today arose as a reaction to the collapse of the Nazi regime and widespread anti-capitalist tendencies in the working class.

Today, these rights are coming increasingly under attack and are barely defended by the establishment parties, including the Social Democratic Party and the Greens. But it is inconceivable that they could be eliminated and replaced by dictatorial forms of rule without encountering substantial resistance among broad sections of the population. It is upon this fact that socialist politics are based. It is impossible to fight for a socialist perspective without defending the existing social and democratic rights of the working class.

Contempt for the working class, indifference to democratic rights and the belief in the omnipotence of the state make the so-called “autonomous scene,” for which the “Antira” article speaks, the ideal breeding ground for state provocations.

This is clear to anyone who has ever observed how the so-called “black bloc” suddenly appears on the fringes of large demonstrations, smashes up windows, demolishes cars and throws incendiary devices, only then to disappear, while the police beat up peaceful demonstrators. Again and again, hooded participants of the “black bloc” have been observed maintaining close contact with the police.

This was best documented on the occasion of the G8 summit in Genoa in July 2001. At that time, several reporters witnessed and some even filmed “black bloc” thugs in discussion with the police, who then went on the rampage undisturbed by state forces, and so provided the pretext for attacks on peaceful demonstrators. State attorneys later discovered that the security forces had employed many police provocateurs and well-known right-wing extremists camouflaged as anarchists, who then smashed hundreds of shop windows and set cars on fire.

The boundary between political stupidity and provocation in such cases can only be determined with difficulty. But even where there is such a boundary, the activities of autonomous “super-revolutionaries” and support for the state lie far closer than one generally imagines. Proof of this is provided by the biography of

Germany’s most well-known stone thrower, Joschka Fischer.

Just 10 years lay between Fischer’s years of “revolutionary combat”—during which he was not merely content with smashing windowpanes, but also aimed his missiles at police—and his swearing-in as environment minister in the Hessian state legislature. Now he represents the state as German foreign minister and vice-chancellor. Fischer’s career is usually presented as a successful Pauline conversion. But throughout his ascent from membership of the “Revolutionary Struggle” group to the highest government office runs a common thread—his hostility and contempt for the working class

Being directly implicated, the WSWS Editorial Board has the greatest interest in uncovering the background to the attack on the immigration office in Frankfurt (Oder). So far, the only notable result of this attack has been the offensive conducted by the Brandenburg intelligence service against the WSWS.

Two-and-a-half months later, investigations by the police and state attorneys have still produced no result. The secret service, however, did not wait before accusing the WSWS of ideological responsibility for the attack. The following questions must therefore be posed: who deposited the two-year-old WSWS article at the scene of the crime, do the secret service and police know more than they are admitting, and did any state agencies have a hand in the matter?

The accusation in the “Antira” article—that the WSWS is persecuting and denouncing anti-racists by carrying out its own investigations into the background of the attack in Frankfurt (Oder)—is grotesque. The same reasoning could be employed against journalists, civil rights organizations and lawyers who investigated the background to the events in Genoa of July 2001, accusing them of “persecuting” anti-globalisation protestors. In fact, they were able to uncover the extent of the state provocations so thoroughly that even the public prosecutor’s office was forced to act in the end.

The WSWS Editorial Board does not know who is responsible for the attack in Frankfurt (Oder). It cannot be excluded that it involved politically misguided young people, who imagine this is the way to fight xenophobia and racism. But if this should be the case, then it is not the WSWS but the “Antira” author who bears responsibility if they come into difficulties with police and the law. The “Antira” article is highly irresponsible. It defends and justifies actions that are politically stupid and senseless, and which lure politically naive young people into a trap, in which they can easily be criminalised.



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