

Nazi ideology from Germany's Bundesbank

Peter Schwarz
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Rarely since the fall of the Nazi regime have racist theses been propounded so openly in Germany as in the newly published book by Bundesbank (Germany's central bank) executive board member Thilo Sarrazin. Titled *Germany is Effacing Itself*, the book is a tirade of abuse against Muslim immigrants, spiced with social Darwinist prejudices and racist theories that recall the eugenics of the Third Reich.

Sarrazin, who is longtime member of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), claims that “the cultural and civil equilibrium” of Europe is being threatened by “the prodigious fertility of Muslim immigrants.” He deplores the circumstance that “we, as a people and society, are too slow-acting and indolent even to ensure a birth rate capable of maintaining constancy and guaranteeing our future, and instead delegate this task to immigrants.”

As a result, he warns, “autochthonous Germans” will in a short time become the minority in a country where “Turkish and Arabic are spoken widely, women wear headscarves, and the daily schedule is determined by the call of muezzins.”

Sarrazin ascribes a generally lower intelligence to Muslims than to other groups in the population and declares that this is genetically conditioned. He concludes: “When people with a high degree of education continue to have a below-average fertility rate, compared to an above-average fertility rate of people with a low degree of education, this will over time be detrimental to the intellectual potential of the population.”

Sarrazin stops at nothing, not even the most primitive, biologically justified racism. In a recent interview with *Welt am Sonntag* he ranted about the “gene pool of the European population” and stated: “All Jews share a certain gene, Basques have certain genes, which differentiate them from others.”

Such claims are not merely scientifically absurd; the

very same pseudo-biological arguments were used by academic apologists of the Nazis to justify the theory of the “Untermensch” and of “life unworthy of life.”

Sarrazin is not just a crazy eccentric. His racist theses have been eagerly taken up and propagated by the media.

Der Spiegel and *Bild* have published in advance the most provocative excerpts from his new book. *Welt am Sonntag* made two pages available to him in a detailed interview. *Die Welt* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*—the organ of German big business—have defended his theses.

The general response of more liberal press organs is to claim that Sarrazin has posed the correct questions, but failed to express them properly. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* writes: “He has identified a problem which will still exist when the waves of indignation have passed—the massive failure to integrate on the part of the Muslim minority in Germany.”

Television talk shows have also offered Sarrazin a forum to spread his filthy views. Standpoints formerly confined to extreme right-wing circles are now being accepted as serious contributions to the public debate.

Sarrazin has been a member of the SPD for 37 years. He has not been expelled from its ranks. Party chairman Sigmar Gabriel has announced new expulsion proceedings against Sarrazin—only because of his references to “Jewish genes” and not because of his tirades against Muslims—but he has also admitted that the phone calls on Sarrazin that have reached Willy Brandt House in recent days have been “almost exclusively positive.”

Nor does Sarrazin stand alone on the international plane. The revival of fascist ideas long regarded as relics of a bleak past is a Europe-wide phenomenon.

In the Netherlands, the Dutch Liberals and Christian Democrats have forged a government alliance with Geert Wilders, whose program consists of hateful

tirades against Muslims. In Hungary, the ruling Fidesz party maintains close links to the Jobbik movement. The latter draws on the tradition of the fascist Arrow Cross Party, which, in the final months of World War II, sent 500,000 Hungarian Jews to their deaths. In France, President Nicolas Sarkozy has initiated a witch-hunt against Roma in order to divert attention from his sinking popularity and involvement in corruption scandals.

How is one to account for this dramatic swing to the right in European politics? Why are views that were formerly the stock-in-trade of extreme right-wing circles now becoming acceptable amongst established bourgeois layers?

The answer lies in the intensification of social tensions. The ruling class went on the offensive this spring in the course of the Greek debt crisis. The stimulus programs of the previous year were replaced by draconian austerity programs. The billions handed to the banks are now to be recouped at the expense of the working population.

The result of this policy is devastating cuts in social programs and public services, mass layoffs and wage cuts.

The agitation against immigrants, Muslims and Roma serves to divert rising popular discontent and channel it against those least able to defend themselves. It fulfills the same function as the anti-Semitism of the Nazis. It is aimed at dividing the working class and mobilizing the most backward social layers on the basis of right-wing policies.

The person and career of Thilo Sarrazin embody this combination of attacks on the working population and racist agitation.

Born in 1945, the son of a Huguenot family, Sarrazin joined the SPD in 1973 and climbed the career ladder to the executive board of the Bundesbank with the help of the party, occupying on the way up posts in various ministries. Following German reunification, he held a key position in the Treuhand, the body set up to wind down the industry and economy of former East Germany—a process that resulted in the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs.

In 2002, the SPD and the Party of Democratic Socialism (the latter has since formed the Left Party) appointed him head of finance in the Berlin state government. Here Sarrazin played a double role. As a

ruthless cost-cutter he initiated a sharp decline in social conditions in Berlin. At the same time, he served as a lightning rod for the SPD-Left Party coalition, drawing the anger of the city's population toward himself personally with a series of provocative outbursts.

Although Sarrazin made no secret of his right-wing views, he was kept on as finance senator by the SPD and the Left Party until 2009. Based on recommendations from both the SPD-led Berlin Senate and the SPD-led Brandenburg government, Sarrazin was then appointed to the board of the Bundesbank, which has used its authority to push for brutal austerity policies across Europe.

In his role as Berlin finance senator, Sarrazin was largely responsible for the social crisis that now serves as the starting point for his agitation against immigrant workers—the decline of schools and universities, the lack of jobs and training opportunities, the decay of neighborhoods.

It must be taken as a warning when this longtime Social Democrat places himself at the head of a racist smear campaign. The decay of capitalist society is so far advanced that the ruling class and its lackeys in the media and the bourgeois parties—including the SPD—can maintain themselves in power only by whipping up fascist sentiments.

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