

Dangerous developments in Germany

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Political developments in Germany are moving in an increasingly dangerous direction. Despite widespread popular sympathy for the plight of refugees fleeing for their lives from war-torn countries, a sinister campaign is underway, led by a cabal of military-intelligence agencies, right-wing forces in the media, and chauvinist and neo-fascist political organizations, to whip up a racially-charged atmosphere of political panic in which authoritarian rule is justified as both necessary and legitimate.

For the first time since the fall of Hitler's Third Reich in 1945, the use of racialist and fascist rhetoric has become part of daily political discourse. Hardly a day goes by without the media inviting representatives of extreme right-wing parties such as the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the viciously anti-immigrant Pegida movement to spout their fascist demagoguery before national audiences.

Last week, AfD leader Björn Höcke appeared on television with a German flag to revive national-chauvinist myths of a one thousand year-old Germany. The sub-text of his ranting—that Germany must preserve its racial purity against foreign influences—was impossible to miss.

The media also chose to give wide coverage to a rally staged by Höcke in the mid-sized city of Erfurt, in which the would-be führer declared: "Erfurt is a beautiful German city, and it must remain German." Another speaker at the rally, Alexander Gauland of the AfD, denounced the conservative Christian Democratic-Social Democratic coalition government led by Chancellor Angela Merkel for failing to protect Germany. "It's about time that we take the fate of the German people out of Merkel's hands," he declared, "so that it can remain a German people."

In Germany, the origins and significance of such statements are well understood. A recent article in *Stern* magazine accused the AfD of "lapsing into Nazi

jargon" and reviving the "racist theories" of the Nazis.

The resort to Nazi-sounding, threatening rhetoric is part of a new political climate in which Merkel is being criticized openly by elements in the security and military apparatus of the state, who are working closely with the most right-wing elements within the ruling coalition. Only yesterday, Christian Social Union (CSU) Chairman Horst Seehofer threatened extralegal "emergency measures" if Merkel did not adopt more extreme anti-refugee policies.

Seehofer is demanding the introduction of extremely strict border controls, the construction of border walls, and large deployments of police and military forces to keep refugees out.

Spiegel magazine called Seehofer's language "Nazi-like" and accused him of "promoting totalitarian thought."

Sections of the security apparatus are pushing in this direction. The *Welt am Sonntag* has reported that state security forces are waiting impatiently for Merkel to either take action against the refugees or resign from office. A senior security official who did not want to reveal his name "for fear of reprisals," was cited as saying: "The large influx of people from other parts of the world will lead to instability in our country."

There is a vast chasm between the extreme right-wing shift in the German ruling elite and the generally left sentiment among working people and youth. While the media slobbers over the filth spewing from people like Höcke and Gauland and reports the right-wing demonstrations as major political events, it plays down the mass pro-refugee demonstrations that have been supported by hundreds of thousands.

While the rhetoric of the extreme right has failed to attract genuinely mass support, the developments in Germany allow for no complacency. The degree to which the politics of the extreme right have acquired legitimacy is a byproduct of the increasingly militaristic

and anti-democratic policies pursued by the German government.

The German ruling class, notwithstanding the horrific crimes committed between 1933 and 1945, is engaged in a new effort to transform Germany into a global military power. This new orientation requires the mobilization of a right-wing movement and the creation of an authoritarian regime.

Tens of millions of Germans—above all, in the working class—are profoundly hostile to the growing power and influence of the extreme right. They are opposed to war and racism. But their opposition is blocked from effective action by the Left Party, the Social Democratic Party (which rules alongside the Christian Democrats), and the trade unions.

There is only one political force that has warned of the growing danger from the right, and that is the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality. The building of this party and new sections of the International Committee throughout Europe is a key strategic task that confronts the working class.



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