

Hundreds of Neo-Nazis riot in Leipzig, Germany

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On Monday hundreds of organised right-wing extremists attacked a leftist meeting place, a Turkish restaurant, and homes in the city of Leipzig. The fascist terror took place as members of the far-right Pegida movement held a demonstration in the city.

The riot in Leipzig took place a day after four groups of foreigners were attacked Sunday in Cologne, the police said.

This wave of far-right violence is taking place amid a wave of racist hysteria spread by politicians and the media following alleged sexual attacks by immigrants in Cologne on New Years' Eve.

What took place Monday evening in the Leipzig suburb of Connewitz, where many students and leftists live, can only be described as an organised pogrom. At least 250 neo-Nazis travelled by car to the district from all over the state of Saxony. According to investigators they had parked their cars in various locations and then gathered together in the city suburb.

Eyewitnesses cited by the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (LVZ) spoke of a horde of neo-Nazis "goose-stepping" through the district and then commencing their rampage of violence at the corner of Wolfgang-Heinze Street. "They were carrying large stones, which they had apparently brought along. It was as if they had a definite leader who had to give a signal," witness Steffen told the LVZ.

Another eyewitness said that the mob was armed with baseball bats and axes. They broke numerous windows, stormed into a Turkish restaurant and threw tables and benches through the windows into the street.

Police said dozens of windowpanes were shattered in Connewitz, fireworks ignited, and cars set on fire. The destruction was evidently planned. The windows of a local football club with leftist supporters, "Roter Stern Leipzig" and several nearby bars were shattered. Police arrested 211 participants, and a number of individuals have pressed charges for assault.

A number of violent attacks by Nazis on leftists took place in Leipzig in the 1990s, but according to the historian Sascha Lange in the LVZ the latest riots have to be considered historically. "We have to assume it was the biggest attack by right-wing extremists on shops and houses in Leipzig since the November Pogrom of 1938." Lange is an expert on resistance groups in the Third Reich.

Although the activity by the neo-Nazis had been announced in advance in social networks as "Storm on Leipzig" and was evidently a highly coordinated and organized action, the police only intervened after the damage had been done. When the police came, the neo-Nazis surrendered without resistance, although the police were initially outnumbered.

Links between the extreme right and the state apparatus are particularly pronounced in Saxony. The State Office for Political Education played a role during the past year in building up the right wing extremist and xenophobes of the Pegida movement. Several leading neo-Nazis in Saxony were, and remain on the payroll of the secret services. On Monday it was announced that the fascist NPD party has its own informants in the Leipzig police. The party published internal police documents on leftist activists, including their names and addresses.

Based on the background to the riots in Connewitz it cannot be ruled out that they were carried out with the knowledge of the security forces or were even initiated by them.

At the same time the neo-Nazis were responding to the racist campaign promoted by German political parties and the media following the New Year's incidents at Cologne Central Station. The far right feel they have wind in their sails following nearly two weeks of officially sanctioned xenophobia.

This was clear on the Legida demonstration, which took place simultaneously with the riots. The right-wing

extremists of Legida—an offshoot of Pegida—celebrated the movement’s first anniversary on Monday evening. Pegida sent some of its supporters from Dresden, and others came from Chemnitz to attend the demonstration in Leipzig. There were a total of about 3,000 participants.

Referring to the events on New Year’s Eve, Pegida leader Tatjana Festerling spoke of a “widespread terrorist attack on blonde, white, German women” by “Afro-Arab Sex-terrorists.” Blame rested, she said, with German politicians who had left the German population defenceless by allowing immigrants to enter the country.

The witch hunting of foreigners and refugees is directly linked to the campaign carried out in recent days by the media. Germany’s most widely read newspaper, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, published a cartoon featuring a black hand grasping at the midsection of a white woman. The magazine *Focus* featured a picture of a naked white woman on the cover with black handprints all over her body. *Die Zeit* ran the headline: “The Nightmare—Arab men who grope German women.”

This campaign has deliberately fomented a pogrom-like climate, which has encouraged the right-wing extremists. The population is to be terrorized and intimidated in order to permit the ruling elite to enforce its policy of war and social attacks, for which it lacks any democratic mandate.

To this same end, the right-wing extremist movement Pegida has been consistently promoted by official and media circles. The fascist demagogues at the head of this movements have been given prime time spots on TV talk shows, received premises from the State Office for Political Education and received invitations to participate in discussions from politicians from all of the leading political parties.

This week’s riots in Leipzig are a direct consequence of the legitimization of racism, militarism, and extreme nationalist politics by the political establishment and media.



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