

Nazi propaganda during German Unity celebration in Dresden

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The celebrations of Monday's Day of German Unity, held this year in Dresden, were determined by two events. With a large contingent of police and firm control of the city, security forces had imposed a de facto state of emergency in the capital of the state of Saxony.

Simultaneously, the police encouraged activists from the right-wing Pegida group to demonstrate in front of the main reviewing stands, spewing fascist hate slogans. The police even permitted the neo-fascists to carry a placard with a quote from the Nazi propagandist Josef Goebbels.

As the national dignitaries, led by President Joachim Gauck, Bundestag President Norbert Lammert and Chancellor Angela Merkel, arrived Monday afternoon for an ecumenical service in the Dresden Frauenkirche and a subsequent ceremony in the Semper Opera, they were forced to pass through a mob hurling abuse. Cries of "traitors", "rabble", "Get out" and "Merkel has to go" were among the more harmless tirades.

Although the police had imposed a ban on protests in the immediate vicinity, they allowed Pegida supporters to congregate. They later justified this decision by saying that they did not envisage any threat to the conduct and security of the festivities by Pegida. The extent to which the police supported the right-wing demonstrators was made clear by one police officer who ended his loudspeaker announcement by wishing Pegida supporters a "successful day."

The speeches on Monday confirmed that the establishment parties are determined to use the Pegida demonstrations to increasingly shift the political climate further to the right. Saxony's Premier Stanislaw Tillich (CDU) described the protesters as "deeply unpatriotic," claiming that true patriots should oppose them.

Bundestag President Lammert (CDU), who gave the keynote speech this year, said it should be acknowledged how well most people in Germany live today. "We live in circumstances which are the envy of almost the whole world," he said. Germany is now "in better shape than ever before."

Lammert referred to a survey presented earlier this year at the World Economic Forum in Davos, in which 16,000 people from around the world, leaders in business, science and management, described Germany in terms of political stability, economic prosperity, social security, education, science and infrastructure as "the best country on this earth". Lammert did not go so far as to speak of pride in Germany, but claimed that Germans could and should have "a little more self-confidence."

The words of Chancellor Merkel, who described Unity Day as a day to celebrate, rang hollow, and not just because of the right-wing chants and insults. Millions of people are concerned about political developments accompanying the global crisis of capitalism, which 26 years after the reunification of Germany is assuming increasingly dramatic forms.

The crisis at Deutsche Bank makes clear that nothing has been solved since the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008 and the subsequent global financial crisis. The economic and political implications of Britain's exit from the European Union remain completely unpredictable. The European Union is in an advanced stage of dissolution. States of emergency prevail in France and Turkey.

As was the case in the thirties, the crisis of capitalism is once again fueling ultra-right and fascist forces. The ultra-right Alternative for Germany, which has won increasing support in a series of state elections, is part of a global development: Donald Trump in the USA,

Marine Le Pen in France and Norbert Hofer in Austria, to name just a few.

Three years ago, the German President Joachim Gauck used the Day of German Unity to give his “great power” speech in which he demanded that Germany “in Europe and the world” must once again play a role commensurate with its size and influence. “In a world full of crises and upheavals,” he argued, the country needed an active military and foreign policy.

Since then, a systematic military buildup has been taking place with the German army in the front line as part of the NATO deployment against Russia, and in conflicts in the Middle East and Africa. Defense spending is increasing and the military budget is to be almost doubled, from 1.2 to 2 percent of gross domestic product. An additional €130 billion is spent on weapons and a sophisticated “cyber army” with 13,500 soldiers.

Parallel to the military buildup, wages and social spending are being cut with one austerity program after the other. Millions of people in Germany live in abject poverty, 26 years after reunification, while a super-rich upper class squanders billions and determines policy. The wealth tax was abolished 20 years ago, to be followed by the reduction of the top rate of tax from 53 to 42 percent, plus myriad other benefits for the wealthy and top earners.

At the same time, the Hartz IV laws imposed new, harsh restrictions and cuts in social and unemployment benefits, creating a huge low-wage sector. More and more people are forced to work in this low-wage environment, unable to make ends meet despite working, and continually forced to beg for alms from the Hartz IV bureaucracy.

The haughty speeches about the “beauty of Germany,” delivered last weekend, were aimed at masking the fact that under the surface a social storm of enormous proportions is brewing.

The events in Dresden make clear the urgency of building a new party of the working class, which opposes the growing threat of war and the permanent welfare cuts on the basis of an international socialist program.

Otherwise there is a serious risk that right-wing demagogues will be able to divert the widespread anger at the ruling elite and its conformist parties into the arms of the fascists. The extent to which these right-wing demagogues receive support from the police and

parts of the security apparatus was very much in evidence in Dresden.



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