

Neo-Nazi mob rampages through East German city of Chemnitz

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Yesterday evening, some 1,000 neo-Nazis gathered in the East German city of Chemnitz and chanted right-wing slogans. The day before, hundreds of right-wing extremists marched through the centre of the city and chased people they identified as immigrants or refugees. Footage posted on social media shows right-wing demonstrators threatening and attacking people and chanting slogans including “This is our city,” “Get out of our city,” and “Free, social, and national.”

The anti-foreigner demonstrations were called by the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and a right-wing football hooligan group known as “Kaotica Chemnitz.”

The right-wing extremists staged the demonstrations in response to the death of a 35-year-old man on Saturday night. The circumstances of the man’s death are unclear. According to police, “several people of different nationalities” were involved in a dispute after a city festival. Several participants then fled the crime scene, and a 22-year-old Iraqi and a 23-year-old Syrian were taken into custody. The two men are accused by the police of repeatedly stabbing the 35-year-old.

On Monday, media outlets reported that the deceased was a Cuban-born German who had “liked” several anti-Nazi social media posts and had made statements critical of the AfD.

Both the federal government and the Saxony state government were forced to distance themselves from the actions of the right-wing mob. “What was seen in Chemnitz yesterday and recorded in videos has no place in our constitutional state,” government spokesman Steffen Seibert said on Monday in Berlin. “We do not accept such mobs, hunting down people who appear different or foreign, or the attempt to spread hatred on the streets. We have no place for this in our cities, and I can say that the federal government

condemns this in the strongest terms.”

Saxony state Premier Michael Kretschmer (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) said it was “disgusting how right-wing extremists whip things up on the Internet and call for violence. We will not allow the image of our country to be damaged by chaos.” The Federal Commissioner for East German Affairs and Saxony’s Minister of Economic Affairs Martin Dulig (Social Democratic Party, SPD), added, “vigilante justice, speculation and rumour are misplaced after the deadly knife attack.”

These statements cannot hide the fact that the establishment parties bear direct political responsibility for the pogrom-like scenes in Chemnitz. The right-wing extremists have been encouraged by the anti-refugee policies of the ruling parties. The grand coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats at the federal level, and the various state governments, have effectively adopted the xenophobic anti-refugee policies of the AfD. A system of camps to hold refugees is being created nationwide, mass deportations are taking place, and the media and all the establishment parties are demagogically inciting hatred against refugees.

Recent events in Dresden have exposed the close links between right-wing extremist groups, the repressive apparatus of the state, and the official parties. On August 16, a ZDF television film crew, which sought to film a far-right Pegida demonstration, was detained by police for three quarters of an hour after a demonstrator staged a provocation. The crew had their IDs checked and were prevented from carrying out their work for nearly an hour.

It subsequently became known that the Pegida protester who provoked the incident is an employee of the Saxony State Criminal Police Office (LKA), which

has close ties to the radical right-wing extremists. Kretschmer, Dresden police chief Horst Kretzschmar and the chairman of the German police union, Rainer Wendt, all backed the Saxony police and defended the attack on the freedom of the press.

Last month's annual report by the domestic secret service (BfV), which branded several left-wing political organizations, including the Socialist Equality Party, as "extremist" groups, was closely coordinated with the far-right AfD.

In recent weeks it has become known that BfV head Hans-Georg Maassen has met several times with leading representatives of the AfD, including party chief Alexander Gauland, his predecessor Frauke Petry and AfD MP Stephan Brandner. The latter owes his office as Chairman of the Committee on Legal Affairs of the Bundestag (German parliament) to the Social Democratic Bundestag Vice-President Thomas Oppermann, who had nominated him for the position in a secret ballot.

The SPD's move to continue the grand coalition involved the conscious decision to make the AfD the official opposition party in the Bundestag.

In Saxony, the right-wing extremist scene has close ties with the state apparatus. In 2015, the State Agency for Civic Education participated in the creation of the right-wing Pegida movement. Numerous leading neo-Nazis are on the payroll of the secret services, which protect the right-wing extremists. The latest report by the domestic secret service of Saxony explicitly states: "The Alternative for Germany (AfD) and Pegida Dresden are not under observation by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution or of the State Office for the Protection of the Constitution of Saxony."

Significantly, the neo-Nazi mob was able to move through Chemnitz almost undisturbed by the police on Sunday and Monday. "Several eyewitnesses report that participants in the right-wing demonstration could move around without police intervention," the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* reported. In social media posts, several participants in a left-wing counter-protest reported that they had been attacked on the way home.

It cannot be ruled out that the appearance of the neo-Nazi demonstrators was closely coordinated with, or even provoked by, the security authorities. The AfD, which has close ties to the police and intelligence

services, instigated the right-wing mob. AfD parliamentarian Markus Frohnmaier called on Twitter Sunday for vigilante justice: "If the state can no longer protect the citizens, people go to the streets and protect themselves."

Saxony's AfD vice-president, Siegbert Droese, defended the actions of the right-wing extremists at a Monday press conference, declaring, "How this may have happened... I can quite understand." Droese and Frohnmaier (a former CDU member) both belong to the far-right national ('völkisch') wing of the AfD. According to media reports, Droese owns a blue AfD car with the license plate L-AH1818 – including the initials of Adolf Hitler.

The neo-Nazi riots in Chemnitz are a serious warning. Ultimately, they are the result of Germany's return to a militarist foreign policy, which is being pursued by the Federal Government with the adoption of a new strategy document for the Bundeswehr (Germany's armed forces) and the calls by SPD Foreign Minister Heiko Maas for Germany to pursue a "great power" policy independent of the United States. As in the 1930s, the reactionary policies of the ruling class—militarism, police state build-up, and social austerity—demand the promotion of nationalism and racism.



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