

“In Germany, of all places, we should know better”

Tens of thousands protest across Germany against neo-Nazi violence in Chemnitz

Our reporters
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Following a neo-Nazi rampage in Chemnitz last Sunday and Monday, tens of thousands have demonstrated across Germany against the far right. Around 10,000 young people and workers took to the streets in the Neuköln district of Berlin on Thursday. Then on Friday, several hundred demonstrators assembled in front of Saxony’s state office in Berlin. Several thousand protested in other cities, including Frankfurt and Chemnitz.

In Berlin, *World Socialist Web Site* reporters spoke with Stefan, 29, a Chemnitz native who studies in Potsdam. “I wasn’t there over the weekend, but I was born in Chemnitz. It has a big effect on you when you know the city and see the scenes that played out on the streets and know what has been happening in Saxony over the past two or three decades since reunification. This is a new low. I was really staggered by it, it left me feeling helpless. That’s why I’m here today, to send a message.”

Stefan said he supports “a world and a country where people can live together, irrespective of where they come from, their skin colour, their beliefs; where people cooperate peacefully, live together in peace, and don’t have to live in a world of hate.” That’s why “I’m here today. Because I think if you don’t start to stand up now, at some point it will be too late, and I don’t want to have to accuse myself of not being there if it should come to that.”

Stefan said that he sees disturbing “parallels” with the 1920s and 1930s. “If you look at the history of the NSDAP [Nazi Party], they began as a tiny group and nobody took them seriously. They were shouted down as a right-wing mob and suppressed, and then it took ten years before the party came to power. ... I think we

have the chance to prevent it now.” Stefan said he was “deeply concerned that if we don’t decisively oppose it now, something similar could be repeated.”

Asked about the close connections between right-wing extremists, the police and the government in Saxony in particular, Stefan said: “I was at the counter-protests against Pegida in 2015 and one thing was clear from the beginning: if you looked at how the police were acting, you knew whose side some of the officers were on. The state apparatus, police and authorities have a magnetic attraction for people with this outlook. I think that nationalist standpoints and state institutions complement each other, precisely because the state institutions work to defend the nation-state.”

In Frankfurt, more than 10,000 people took part in a “rock against the right” concert on September 1.

Dennis, a student from Offenbach, said of the Nazi march in Chemnitz: “Things like that shouldn’t be allowed to happen. The AfD [Alternative for Germany] is clearly an inhumane party.” He said the policies of the grand coalition are a major factor in the rise of the Nazis. The participation of the SPD [Social-Democratic Party] in the German government was “a huge disappointment” for him.

“Currently they present themselves in the [Hesse state parliamentary] election campaign as advocates for social protections. But in reality, they never implement any of that, but instead go along with the right-wing policies of the grand coalition. They are therefore jointly responsible for what’s happening.” Dennis was especially disgusted by the grand coalition’s refugee policy. “We have to say loud and clear: we don’t want Anker centres [detention centres for refugees] to be established everywhere. We want people to be treated

like people and not as a problem.”

Aaron, who just completed high school, was worried about the reemergence of fascist forces in Germany. “They exploited the murder of an innocent man to spread their right-wing ideology. But we can’t allow any space for this right-wing agitation. In Germany, of all places, we should know better, we’ve all seen where it leads.”

Aaron said the police gave the fascists free reign in Chemnitz: “You could see that these forces had free rein for hours. The police did nothing to counter them.” By comparison, one only has to look at “what happened last year at the G20 protests in Hamburg and how the police cracked down on the left. In Chemnitz, the right wing was free to do what they liked.”

Anne and Tim travelled to Frankfurt. “It’s important to stand up to the right wing now!” stated Anne, who studies in Mainz. Tim, who comes from a small village in northern Hesse, also thought it is important “to do something against the racists. At home in the village there are—unfortunately—too many of them,” he added.

Anne and Tim were concerned that “our state spends so much on the military.” That is “an outrage,” said Anne. “All of the preparations for new wars—it’s the wrong direction. They’re only concerned about controlling resources. Nobody can tell me that these wars are for humanitarian reasons. If that were the case, the first thing they could do is save the people in the Mediterranean. But nobody wants to do that.” Tim added, “First they sell deadly weapons around the world—and then they complain when there are refugees.”

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In Chemnitz on Saturday, thousands blocked a so-called “funeral march” by the far right, during which there were further attacks on journalists and left-wing protesters.

World Socialist Web Site reporters and members of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) spoke with Herta, 50, who lives near Chemnitz. “It’s a disgrace that the far right can march here like this,” she said. “We want to show that many people are opposed to it.” The established parties “do nothing against the Nazis.” Asked who she held responsible for the rise of the far right, Herta answered, “The CDU [Christian Democratic Union] adopts the same policies as the

AfD, so it’s hardly surprising.”

Marvin, 18, came with friends from Dresden to the demonstration. “Nazis shouldn’t be allowed to hunt people through the city. I’m worried that it’s going to be like what it was under Hitler here,” said Marvin. Many other young people he knew felt the same way. He was outraged at the police, who do nothing to protect foreigners and refugees. “Although the AfD protest is large, I think most people here are against the AfD.”

Today, a “rock against the right” concert is planned in Chemnitz, featuring the bands Die Tote Hosen and Kraftklub. More than 30,000 people have said they will attend the event, according to Facebook, while 100,000 have indicated their solidarity. Members of the SGP and its youth and student organisation, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), will be in Chemnitz and many other cities where further demonstrations against the far right are planned to discuss the necessity of a socialist programme against capitalism, fascism and war.



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